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Crip Writers / Written Crips:
Constructions of Illness and Disability
in Selected Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century
British Poetry and Fiction

by

Heidi L. Janz

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta
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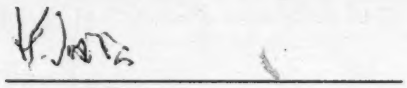

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Crip Writers/Written Crips: Constructions of Illness and Disability in Selected Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century British Poetry and Prose* submitted by Heidi Janz in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Juliet McMaster
Juliet McMaster

Robert Merrett
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Julie Rak
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Dick Sobsey
Dick Sobsey

Bruce Stovel for Helen Deutsch
Helen Deutsch

April 4/03
Date

DEDICATION

To Dr. Michelle Stack, my best friend and colleague, for making my successful completion and survival of my PhD possible on so many levels. First of all, for teaching me, lo those many years ago in high school, that, thankfully, not *all* TABS are normates. Thank you for being my kindred spirit in our quest to get the last laugh on unenlightened educators and healthcare professionals who saw us both as hopelessly *challenged* in various ways. (I think we've done it!) Thanks also for being my guinea-pig/role-model as I continue to break into each new phase of my academic career. But most of all, thank you for being the Most Superior TAB that any crip was ever blessed with.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the constructions of selected eighteenth-century disabled (i.e., crip) writers and nineteenth-century written crips (i.e., fictional characters with disabilities) from a Disability Studies perspective. It explores the ways in which portrayals of illness and disability in the works of eighteenth-century crip writers—Pope, Johnson, and Leapor—and written crips created by nineteenth-century non-disabled authors—Dickens, Trollope, and Eliot—engage with dominant cultural readings of ill and disabled bodies to create either enabling or disabling constructions of illness/disability. It questions the distinction between bodies considered normal, healthy, fully functional, and thus desirable or viable, and those that are not, and thus undesirable or non-viable. A gradual shift is traced from the eighteenth-century view of illness/disability as evidence of an individual's psycho-physiological dysfunction to the nineteenth-century view of illness/disability as social phenomena.

More particularly, the thesis explores how Alexander Pope synthesizes his conflicting identities as Author and Crip into an identity as Crip-Author. It examines the disabilities of Samuel Johnson, beginning with the biographical documentation of his various physical frailties and psychological foibles by James Boswell, and goes on to look at Johnson's own efforts to make meaning out of his fragmented identity through his writing. It considers the eighteenth-century problem of body versus mind manifest in the poetry of Mary Leapor.

The fiction of Dickens is found to demonstrate Dickens' view of illness and disability as social phenomena rather than individual affliction or punishment, resulting in his presentation of ill/disabled characters as embodiments of social ills plaguing Victorian England. The thesis probes the nineteenth-century figure of the proactive invalid by Trollope in his depiction of Mary Belton in *The Belton Estate* and Madeline Neroni in *Barchester Towers*. Eliot's use of the illness of Latimer in "The Lifted Veil" and the deformity of Philip Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss* is studied to articulate the Victorian conception of the connection between an individual's body and mind, as well as broader social implications of this connection.

The thesis ends with a brief discussion of some continuities between its conclusions and constructions of illness and disability prevalent today.

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In the first chapter of this dissertation, I comment on the interconnection and interdependence between crips and TABs as being essential to a crip's well-being and, indeed, her/his very survival. As I now come to the end of what has been a very long, sometimes even perilous, dissertation-writing process, I find myself both acutely aware of and profoundly grateful for the interconnections and interdependences that I have with the TABs and crips in my own life. For it is only through this wonderfully complex network of personal and professional relationships that this Glenrose School Hospital graduate/refugee could ever even dare to dream of doing a PhD.

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Ferchau, Dr. Margaret Thomas, Dr. Wally Wesner, Abby Friesen, Pastor Fred and Hildegard Merke, Pastor Bruno and Liz Doberstein, and, the most recent additions to my arsenal of TABs, **Pastor Shafer and Jeanne Parker,** for their friendship as well as for their tireless spiritual support which has indeed been essential to my emotional, and even probably my physical, survival during the years I've worked on this dissertation.

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Chapter One
Defining Illness, Disability, and "Crip-ness" in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Introduction: Motives and contexts for this study

The question of what distinguishes ill bodies from healthy bodies, and "disabled" bodies from "able" ones, has been a subject of ongoing debate in western society for centuries. The forum for this debate has not been restricted solely to the field of medicine. Indeed, philosophers and writers dating back to Aristotle and Hippocrates have endeavoured to formulate a clear criterion which could be universally employed to differentiate between bodies–healthy versus ill, able versus disabled, normal versus abnormal. Rapid medical technological advances in the late twentieth century have given a whole new complexity and urgency to this kind of distinction between "normal" and "abnormal" bodies in relation to issues such as euthanasia and genetic engineering. Recent cases of so-called "compassionate homicides" committed by parents against their "severely disabled" children have focused media, and thus societal, attention on how we as a society identify and respond to bodies that are "normal," healthy, fully-functional and thus desirable, and/or viable, as opposed to bodies that are "abnormal," unhealthy, disabled, and thus undesirable and/or non-viable.

In his 1995 book, *Enforcing Normalcy*, Lennard J. Davis examines the concept of normalcy as it relates to the common construction of disability. He begins his exploration of the construction of normalcy with the assertion that the

concept of normalcy is based on the practice of "Othering." In other words, what is common to the experience of the majority of the population is considered "normal," whereas whatever is *not* common to the experience of the majority of the population is considered "abnormal," as are the people who have these "abnormal" experiences. From this point, Davis proceeds to expose and interrogate "the presumption that disability is simply a biological fact, a universal plight of humanity throughout the ages" (2-3). His ultimate aim is "to show that disability, as we know the concept, is really a socially driven relation that became relatively organized in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (3). With this goal in mind, he delineates the historical link between this conceptualization of normalcy and the rise of the eugenics movement in the early nineteenth century. He argues that the eugenics movement grew out of the notion of the Social Body or the Body Politic, which is based on the view that a strong nation is a healthy nation. Intrinsic to this nineteenth-century notion of the Body Politic, therefore, is the equation of being "healthy" and having a "normal" body with being a "true citizen." Consequently, those who have "ill" and/or "disabled" bodies are necessarily excluded from "true citizenship."

I believe that the argument Davis makes for the notion of disability as a social construction which develops and takes root in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be borne out by an examination of the portrayals of ill and/or disabled figures in the literature of this period. This kind of exploration of social constructions and literary portrayals of illness and disability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can therefore lead to a better understanding

of the evolution (or perhaps regression) of present-day constructions and portrayals of illness and disability.

Common views of illness and disability in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England

In order to achieve an accurate understanding of the social constructions and literary portrayals of illness and disability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it is necessary to explore the commonly-held views of the body, its functions and dysfunctions, that were prevalent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. Much of eighteenth-century medical theory and practice is based on Humoral Theory–the belief that disease results from an imbalance of the four bodily humors. According to the dictates of Humoral Theory, health was dependent on the maintenance of a precarious balance between the hot, cold, wet, and dry elements in the body. These elements are regulated by the nervous system, which acts as the conduit between body and mind. Consequently, a person's physical condition was directly linked to her/his mental and emotional state via the nervous system. In his book *Imagining Monsters*, Dennis Todd delineates the impact of the Classical Humoral Theory on the eighteenth-century understanding of the relationship between mind and body:

> Human beings were composed of numerous powers, faculties, humors, fluids, solids, and spirits, each of which partook of varying degrees of corporeality or immateriality. The body comprised the dense bones, the less dense but still very solid muscles, the thinner fluids, the more refined humors, and the highly ethereal spirits. The mind, too, had its "lower" faculties (such as common sense, imagination, memory) which were engaged

> immediately with the sensual experience of the corporeal world, and its "higher" faculties (variously called understanding, intellect, and reason), whose objects of apperception were incorporeal. All of these, from the bones to the reason, were ranged in a hierarchy that ran with unbroken continuity from the grossly corporeal through the progressively more rarified and subtle, then gradually fading into the spiritual, first in its lower degrees and then moving to the higher reaches of intellect. And all of these stood in instrumental relation to each other, each affecting and being affected by the more corporeal one below it, each affecting and being affected by the more ethereal one above. And so, in the end, the lowest operations of the body might well impinge upon the highest operations of the mind, but never immediately. Mind and body worked on each other up and down this psycho-physiological continuum, through the "proper and peculiar *Mediums*," the complex chain of intermediaries.[1]
>
> Consider, for example, the animal spirits, which illustrate how intermediaries were conceived of in the human economy and how they functioned within the continuum of mind and body. "The blood is itself the matter out of which the animal spirits are drawn," Willis explained; "and ... the Vessels containing and carrying it everywhere through the whole compass of the Head, are like distillatory Organs, which by circulating more exactly, and as it were subliming the blood, separate its purer and more active particles from the rest, and subtilize them, and at length insinuate those spiritualized into the Brain."[2] (Todd, 54-55)

In other words, eighteenth-century humoral theory constructed the relationship between mind and body not as a duality or binary, but as a "psycho-physiological continuum" in which physical matter was translated by corporeal

---

[1]"For the body works on the mind, by his bad humours, troubling the spirits, sending gross fumes into the brain, and so disturbing the soul, and all the faculties of it; ... so, on the other side, the mind most effectively works upon the body, producing by his passions and perturbations miraculous alterations, as melancholy, despair, cruel disease, and sometimes death itself." (Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith [New York: Tudor Publishing, 1927], 217-218, as cited by Todd.)

[2]Thomas Willis, *The Anatomy of the Brain and the Description and Uses of the Nerves*, trans, Samuel Pordage, ed. William Feindel, 2 vols. (1681; rpt., Montreal: McGill University Press, 1965), 287, as cited by Todd.

senses–i.e. the nervous system–into incorporeal ideas and concepts in the mind. The nervous system is thus central to eighteenth-century physiology in that the nerves were viewed as the conduit between the body and the mind. However, it is important to remember that this "psycho-physiological continuum" between the body and the mind is not always a felicitous, or even amicable, relationship. In fact, along with its adherence to the principles of Classical Humoral Theory, eighteenth-century society embraced the Platonic view of the body as the prison of the mind. This notion of the antagonistic power-struggle that characterizes the relationship between body and mind informs much of eighteenth-century poetry and is at the heart of Elizabeth Carter's "A Dialogue." The opening lines of this poem are a succinct illustration of the archetypal conflict between body and mind:

> Says Body to Mind, 'Tis amazing to see,
> We're so nearly related yet never agree,
> But lead a most wrangling strange sort of a life
> As great plagues to each other as husband and wife.'
> (lines 1-4)

The central image of these lines, and of the entire poem, is the personification of body and mind as two equally unhappy partners trapped in a marriage of necessity. Carter casts Body as a disgruntled husband who complains of being mistreated by Mind, his inconsiderate and domineering wife. The fact that it is the mind Carter casts as a female is quite significant, as it contradicts the conventional eighteenth-century construction of the mind as being a distinctly male faculty. This initial reversal of conventional constructions of gender in the first four lines lays the foundation for further reversals later in this verse-paragraph:

'The best room in my house you have seized for your own,
And turned the whole tenement quite upside down,
While you hourly call in a disorderly crew
Of vagabond rogues, who have nothing to do
But to run in and out, run hurry-scurry, and keep
Such a horrible uproar, I can't get to sleep.
There's my kitchen sometimes is as empty as sound,
I call for my servants, not one's to be found:
They all are sent out on your ladyship's errand,
To fetch some more riotous guests in, I warrant!'
(lines 7-16)

Body's complaint in these lines is clearly reminiscent of the lament of a neglected husband who is being taken advantage of by his selfish, carousing wife. Body therefore, exerting his masculine authority, serves notice to Mind, "And since things are growing, I see, worse and worse, / I'm determined to force you to alter your course" (lines 17-18).

In the second verse-paragraph, Mind counters Body's allegations with her own grievances:

Poor Mind, who heard all with extreme moderation,
Thought it now time to speak, and make her allegation:
'Tis I that, methinks, have most cause to complain,
Who am cramped and confined like a slave in a chain.
I did but step out, on some weighty affairs,
To visit, last night, my good friends in the stars,
When, before I was got half as high as the moon,
You dispatched Pain and Languor to hurry me down;
Vi & Armis they seized me, in midst of my flight,
And shut me in caverns as dark as the night.' (ll. 19-28)

If Carter's initial introduction of "Poor Mind" at the beginning of this verse-paragraph were not a sufficiently clear indication of where the author's sympathies lie in this conflict, Mind's description of being "cramped and confined like a slave in a chain" by self-centered and vengeful Body would certainly tip the

scales in Mind's favour. In these ten lines, she is very convincingly transformed from an inconsiderate and domineering wife into a noble and adventurous free-spirit who is kept from her lofty pursuits by a self-centered husband, a husband so tyrannical that he resorts to sending Pain and Languor as his goons to forcibly capture her in mid flight and shut her "in caverns as dark as the night." These images of lofty pursuits being violently terminated and replaced by utterly stifling entrapment are so vivid that they make Body's subsequent defence, "unless I had closely confined you in hold, / You had left me to perish with hunger and cold" (ll. 31-32), seem petty and childish.

Carter ends the poem by raising the prospect of Mind's ultimate triumph over the tyranny of Body:

> 'I've a friend,' answers Mind, 'who, though slow, is yet sure,
> And will rid me at last of your insolent power:
> Will knock down your walls, the whole fabric demolish,
> And at once your strong holds and my slavery abolish:
> And while in the dust your dull ruins decay,
> I'll snap off my chains and fly freely away.' (ll. 33-38)

Here, Mind hails Death as her ultimate liberator who will eventually come to rid her of Body's "insolent power." The parallel images of destruction and renewal in lines 35 through 38 are compelling illustrations which reinforce the somewhat unconventional construction of Death as liberator. By effectively subverting the traditional image of Death as the ultimate enemy of humanity, and portraying Death as the one "friend" that is powerful enough to rescue Mind from Body's tyranny, Carter successfully constructs Death as the one agent capable of bringing about a final resolution to the conflict between Mind and Body.

I have discussed Carter's poem at some length here because I think that this poem encapsulates many of the fundamentals of the eighteenth-century conceptualization of the relationship between the mind and the body. This relationship, as it is presented by Carter and widely viewed by eighteenth-century society, is a complex and contentious one, for, while body and mind are considered as having a direct impact and influence on one another via the Humors and the nervous system, the two rarely function in harmony. The essence of the human being–the soul–is usually viewed and presented as an ally of the mind, for it too is imprisoned under the often tyrannical rule of the body. Consequently, bodily "afflictions" such as illness and disability were usually considered by eighteenth-century society to be either the manifestation of the body's cruel domination over the mind or the outward evidence of a mind that has itself become corrupted and diseased. The pervasiveness of both these readings of illness and disability in eighteenth-century society can clearly be traced in the career of Alexander Pope, who was dwarfed and debilitated due to tuberculosis of the spine. It seems that, throughout his career, Pope constantly finds himself caught in the stereotypical binary of being marked out as either Monster or Supercrip. As Monster, Pope's deformed and disabled body becomes the external signifier of internal corruption and decay. As Supercrip, however, Pope is seen as one engaged in a noble struggle that sets a virtuous mind against a tyrannical body. Significantly, whether he is cast as Monster or Supercrip, the reading of Pope's body becomes intrinsic to the reading of his work. In either case, the reading of Pope's body by his contemporaries, and by

Pope himself, illustrates the fact that illness and disability, as figured in eighteenth-century society, were very much issues of individual experience, conduct and responsibility.

As we move from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century however, there are a number of gradual but significant shifts that take place in the way that illness and disability are viewed by society and depicted in literature. This shift is indeed gradual; it is important to keep in mind that, although the nineteenth century did see the advent of germ theory and a more accurate understanding of biology made possible by the new practice of dissection, these new medical developments did not gain wide acceptance until well into the nineteenth century. In the meantime, the humoral theory of the eighteenth century was still commonly accepted. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century saw the creation and development of several concepts and constructions that were crucial to the evolving social and literary notions of illness and disability. In broad terms, the social and literary constructions of illness and disability that developed during the nineteenth century tended to shift away from the eighteenth-century emphasis on illness and disability as evidence of an *individual's* psycho-physiological dysfunction, and move towards an emphasis on illness and disability as *social phenomena* which impact the whole of society.

It seems to me that one of the most interesting and important ideas related to illness and disability that originated in the nineteenth century is the notion of invalidism. Miriam Bailin, in her 1994 book, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction*,

discusses the development of the concept of invalidism and its impact on the nineteenth-century attitude toward illness–and, by extension, disability:

> "The cult of ill-health" that Gwen Raverat describes ... was common among the middle classes, despite the coexistent imperatives of self-discipline, will-power, and industriousness.[3] It is most likely that they were related phenomena. Illness authorized the relaxation of the rigidly conceived behavioral codes which governed both work and play within the public realm. And as many memoirs of the time suggest, illness suspended the often draconian measures taken to instill "character" in Victorian middle-class children.[4] The positive associations adhering to both the pleasure and the pain of illness contributed to a strong social sanction for invalidism in Victorian England. (Bailin, 12)

As Bailin points out, the Victorian sickroom came to be seen as a place of escape from the quintessential nineteenth-century conflict between duty and personal inclination. What's more, as the Victorian sickroom becomes a refuge from the constraints and demands of society, it also becomes an alternative–perhaps even subversive–locus of power, what Bailin calls an "alternative community" over which the "invalid" presides (Bailin, 18). As the center of this "alternative community," the "invalid" finds him/herself in a highly unusual position–a position of power. Although, from the vantage point of twenty-first century society, the Victorian sickroom may appear to be a place of isolation, if not ostracization, it was often, for the wise and shrewd invalid, a miniature kingdom over which the invalid had absolute rule. Only within the ostensible

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[3]Raverat, *Period Piece*, 122 [as cited by Bailin].

[4]See, for instance, Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977), 179-180 [as cited by Bailin].

confines of the sickroom did the invalid have the freedom and the power not just to articulate his/her wishes, but to have those wishes carried out. Only as an invalid relegated to the isolation of the Victorian sickroom could a Florence Nightingale circumvent social conventions in order to take on the traditionally male role of authority and command an entire army of nurses. Indeed it was Florence Nightingale who most significantly contributed to the nineteenth-century valorization of illness and nursing by becoming the personification of the archetypal "super invalid," one who knew how to make the sickroom a locus of power.

While invalidism can be seen as a proactive outcome of the nineteenth-century shift towards constructing illness and disability as social phenomena rather than individual failings, a darker, more ambiguous product of this conceptual shift is the emergence of an icon for ill and disabled bodies which was the reverse image of the super-invalid, an icon which Leonard Kriegel calls the "Charity Cripple."[5] As Kriegel points out, the "Charity Cripple" functions as a socially-palatable interpretation of the Othered disabled body:

> The Charity Cripple is far easier for the "normals" to handle. At least, as an image, he is. What he is remains the shadow of how he is seen. He exists to soothe ... Characters such as Black Guineau and Tiny Tim are intended to draw out the charitable impulses of a middle-class audience. They enthral because they relieve both guilt and the need to look directly at the other ... In *A Christmas Carol*, Tiny Tim is Scrooge's Totem. One almost senses that Dickens, in his

---

[5]See Leonard Kriegel, "The Cripple in Literature" *Images of The Disabled: Disabling Images* (New York: Pracger Publishers, 1987).

> heart of hearts, had designed a scene in which Scrooge would be transformed into kindly Uncle Ebenezer by rubbing his hands on Tiny Tim's crutches. (Kriegel, 35-36)

It is interesting to note that the Charity Cripple–unlike the eighteenth-century "monster," but much like its nineteenth-century counterpart, the "super invalid"–is an iconic reading of the disabled/ill body which seeks to place illness/disability into a socially-mediated and socially-remediable context. If the "super invalid" asserts her/his virtues and powers by creating and controlling the "alternative community" of the Victorian sickroom, the "charity cripple" asserts the virtues and powers of Victorian society by presenting herself/himself as the Other whose sufferings can be relieved only through the benevolence of the society. However, as Kriegel indicates, there is also within the construction of the charity cripple an element of self-negation in which the individuality of the disabled/ill figure is essentially swallowed up by his/her function as the Other, a "totem" that exists only to elevate the state of society by having his/her suffering alleviated through social acts of charity. In fact, the "Charity Cripple," by definition, has no identity apart from being the recipient of others' charity. Such a negation of individual identity clearly indicates that the ill/disabled body is of value *only* as the site of social redemption. In and of itself, apart from its function as the site of social redemption, the ill/disabled body of the Charity Cripple is merely a jarring signifier of the Other.

So we see coming out of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries two complementary sets of prototypes for reading ill and disabled bodies. The Augustan preoccupation with notions of the Humoral linkage between mind and

body, and the consequent perception of illness and disability as being either the manifestation of the body's cruel domination over the mind or the outward evidence of a mind that has itself become corrupted and diseased, led to the creation and widespread acceptance of the Monster/Supercrip binary as a gloss for the social reading of ill and disabled bodies. Similarly, the nineteenth-century prototypes of the Super Invalid and the Charity Cripple developed out of the Victorian notions of Invalidism and the Social Body. As the next section of this chapter will demonstrate, these kinds of prototypical sets of binaries are most useful in analyzing and discussing portrayals of illness and disability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Defining Binaries:

Before going any further in this study, I think it would be useful to define and discuss a few basic sets of binary terms and concepts which will be fundamental to the analysis of the portrayal of illness and disability in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry and fiction. It seems to me most logical and most useful to begin with the most basic of these sets of binaries, namely, **wellness vs. illness**. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines **wellness** as "the state of being well or in good health," while it defines **illness** as "[A] bad or unhealthy condition of the body (or, formerly, of some part of it); the condition of being ill." Extrapolating from these definitions, one can say that wellness is the desired state of the body, as it is a state in which the body's integrity has not in any way been compromised by the introduction of a disease or disability that would

impede its optimal functioning. Illness, on the other hand, can be defined as the state in which disease has violated the integrity of the body and limited its capacity to operate properly. Consequently, illness is considered an undesirable bodily state because it is associated with the malfunctioning of one's body.

A second set of binaries which will be fundamental to this study is the notion of **illness vs. disability**. The *O.E.D.* defines **disability** as "[the] Want of ability (to discharge any office or function); inability, incapacity, impotence." In the introduction to *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*, editors David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder offer the following definition of the term **disability**:

> Borrowing from the legislative definition of disability that was outlined in section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, ... the Americans with Disabilities Act recognizes three distinct facets of disability: (1) the impairment of a major life function, (2) an official diagnostic record that identifies a history of an individual's impairment; and (3) a trait or characteristic that results in the stigmatization of the individual as limited or incapacitated. (Mitchell and Snyder, 2)

Although the argument can be made that it is erroneous to apply a twentieth-century definition of disability to its eighteenth and nineteenth-century constructions, it seems to me that this definition is applicable to a discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century constructions of disability because it encapsulates the three elements most central to Augustan and Victorian notions of disability. First of all, this definition highlights the idea that disability constitutes a significant restriction or impairment of a major life function. This statement is very much in line with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought, which held

that the principal indicator of disability is the curtailment of major life functions that are common to the rest of the population.

The second aspect of disability that is emphasized in this definition has to do with the substantiation or validation of an individual's disability through some kind of official medical criteria. The diagnostic terms that were used to formulate these medical criteria in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were most certainly a far cry from what we would now consider to be scientifically accurate, let alone politically correct–terms like "diseased," "crippled," "depraved" and "feeble-minded."[6] They were, however, generally accepted and applied as scientifically demonstrable and medically authoritative. Hence, whereas **illness** is associated with the violation of the body by disease at a given point in time, **disability** is thought of as a long-term or permanent loss of some kind of bodily (physical/mental) function, which has a significant impact on a person's entire identity–that is, a person does not merely *have* a disability, he/she *is* "deformed," "diseased," "crippled" or "feeble-minded."

This brings us to the third aspect of disability that is highlighted in the definition quoted by Mitchell and Snyder, namely, a trait or characteristic that results in the stigmatization of the individual as limited or incapacitated. The idea of stigmatization is crucial to a critical understanding of the social and literary construction of disability, for, as Lerita M. Coleman points out:

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[6]For further discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medical terms used in diagnosing and categorizing disability see Lennard J. Davis "Constructing Normalcy" *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 18-19.

> Stigma appears to be a special and insidious kind of social categorization or, as Martin explains, a process of generalizing from a single experience. People are treated categorically rather than individually, and in the process are devalued ... In addition, as Crocker and Lutsky point out, coding people in terms of categories (eg. "X is a redhead") instead of specific attributes (eg. "X has red hair") allows people to feel that stigmatized persons are fundamentally different and establishes a greater psychological and social distance. (Coleman, 221)

Given the tendency to stigmatize people with disabilities, disability is, in many ways, seen as even more devastating to the integrity of the body than illness because it constitutes a long-term or permanent loss of proper bodily functioning, as opposed to the transient disruption of the normal operation of the body by illness. Furthermore, because of the widespread acceptance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of Classical Humoral Theory with its emphasis on the fundamental link between the body and the mind, instances of disability during this period were usually viewed as outward (physical) evidence of inner (mental/spiritual) corruption. While the ill body may be empathetically regarded as the body that has been victimized by the external forces of sickness and disease, the disabled body is the forever Othered body.

A third set of binaries which will be central to this examination of the portrayal of illness and disability in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry and fiction is the construction of the **cripple** versus the construction of the **crip**. Here again, it is important to bear in mind that there are issues of time/context and usage that need to be addressed when applying these terms to works of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature. According to the *O.E.D.*, the word

cripple, meaning "to creep; either in the sense of one who can only creep, or perhaps rather in that of one who is, in Scottish phrase, `cruppen together', [i.e. contracted in body and limbs]," first came into common English usage in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1347, Chaucer wrote in *Troylus and Creseda*, "It is ful hard to halten unespied / Bifor a crepul, for he kan the craft. " Scanning the earliest instances of the word's usage, one gets the sense that the term "cripple" carried with it a distinct element of Other-ness, both physical and psychological–and perhaps even moral Other-ness as well. By the time Anthony Trollope's *The Belton Estate* was published in 1865, the word "cripple" had taken on a sense of pathos; Trollope describes the invalid, Mary Belton, as "A poor cripple, unable to walk beyond the limits of her own garden" (142). It seems clear from Trollope's use of the word "cripple" in this instance that, while the word still carries a strong connotation of Otherness, it is also meant to evoke palpable feelings of sympathy–though probably not empathy–from the reader. I would argue that this is indicative of a shift that takes place in the nineteenth century, a shift away from the eighteenth-century emphasis on illness and disability as evidence of an *individual's* psycho-physiological dysfunction, and a move towards an emphasis on illness and disability as *social phenomena* which impact the whole of society.

As with the word **cripple**, careful consideration needs to be given to the issues of time/context and usage that surround its colloquial derivative, **crip**, in order to apply this term properly to the analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English poetry and fiction. If the word "cripple" had started to take on

connotations of the pathetic by the mid nineteenth century, the early twentieth-century emergence of its decidedly militant version, "crip," seems to be a concerted effort to counter this sense of pathos–if not just plain patheticness–by recovering a measure of self-identification and agency. Where the "cripple" is merely the Othered object of suspicion or charity, the "crip" is an autonomous entity with the capacity to think and act independently as well as politically. I would therefore argue that, although the term "crip" was a twentieth-century innovation in the discourse of disability, it can still be legitimately applied to individuated, autonomous nineteenth-century disabled characters, such as the lame yet licentious Madeline Neroni in Trollope's *Barchester Towers* and the dwarfed but feisty Jenny Wren in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*. The **crip** is therefore separated from the **cripple**, not by chronological context, but by the restriction or realization of individuality and agency.

The construction of the **crip** is also central to a fourth set of key binaries in this study, namely the **crip** versus the **TAB (Temporarily Able-Bodied)**. Like the term **crip**, the term **TAB** originates in the twentieth century and carries with it distinctly political implications. Carol A. Breckenridge and Candace Vogler observe that, "No one is ever more than temporarily able-bodied. This fact frightens those of us who half-imagine ourselves as minds in a material context, who have learned to resent the publicness of race- or sex- or otherwise-marked bodies, and to think theories of embodiment as theories about the subjectivity of able-bodied comportment and practice under conditions of systematic injustice" (35). To refer to someone else–or, in an act requiring even greater boldness, to

refer to oneself–as a **TAB** is to acknowledge both the vulnerability and the transience of corporeal subjectivity. Therefore, while the **TAB** body is constructed in binary opposition to the **crip** body, lived human experience shows the division between **TAB** bodies and **crip** bodies to be infinitely and precariously permeable. Social as well as corporeal realities dictate the necessity of a certain degree of interconnection, dependence and even mutual cooperation between **crips** and **TABs**. It is, therefore, these points of interconnection between **crips** and **TABs** which serve as defining moments for crip writers who author their own crip-ness, as well as for TAB authors who create written crips.

The fifth and final set of binaries that will be fundamental to this study of the portrayal of illness and disability in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British poetry and fiction is the notion of these portrayals as either **acts of representation by writers with disabilities (i.e., crip writers)** or **acts of presentation by non-disabled writers (i.e., written crips)**. This binary will actually serve as the primary organizing structure for this study, as I have chosen to divide the literary portrayals of illness and disability which I will be discussing into these two categories. As Rosemary Garland Thomson observes, the issue of presenting and/or representing disability is fraught with complexity:

> Not only is the relationship between text and world not exact, but representation also relies upon cultural assumptions to fill in missing details. All people construct interpretive schemata that make their worlds seem knowable and predictable, thus producing perceptual categories that may harden into stereotypes or caricatures when communally shared and culturally inculcated.
> (Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 11)

This study is therefore an exploration of the ways in which crip writers and writers of written crips "construct interpretive schemata that make their worlds seem knowable and predictable." In the first half of this study, I will be exploring the construction of illness and disability in the works of Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson and Mary Leapor, three eighteenth-century poets and essayists whose writing was informed by their own experience of having an illness/disability. I will examine how these authors thus create literary re-presentations of their own illnesses/disabilities. In the second half of this study, I will be looking at portrayals of illness and disability in the works of three non-disabled nineteenth-century novelists, namely Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope and George Eliot who present illness/disability as defining features of their characters. This division is not as arbitrary as it may, at first, appear. When we consider the shift that takes place between the eighteenth-century emphasis on illness and disability as evidence of an *individual's* psycho-physiological dysfunction and the nineteenth-century emphasis on illness and disability as *social phenomena* which impact the whole of society, it stands to reason that authors writing in the eighteenth century would find the social milieu conducive to the expression of their own experiences of illness and disability through their writing, while authors writing in the nineteenth century would tend to think and write about illness and disability in relation to the increasingly prevalent social constructs of the Body Politic and the Social Body. Furthermore, intrinsic to the rise of the novel as a new literary genre in the nineteenth century was its function as a new and innovative forum in which to explore social issues. Through this study, therefore, I will endeavour to trace

the evolution of social attitudes towards illness and disability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as they are reflected in the works of these six authors. In doing this, I will also seek to trace the reciprocal impact that social attitudes towards illness/disability and literary constructions of illness/disability had on each other in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and are continuing to have on each other in the twenty-first century.

Illness, Disability and Issues of Identity Construction:

To begin this study of *crip writers* and *written crips*, I think it would be useful to consider some central questions of identity construction as they relate to the portrayals of illness and disability in the works of crip writers, Pope, Johnson and Leapor, and in the written crips created by TABs, Dickens, Trollope and Eliot, since these are the questions that will be engaged and re-engaged throughout this study. The first of these questions is: *What kind of impact do the illnesses/disabilities of Pope, Johnson and Leapor have on their self-image as it is presented in their writings?* As further exploration of their works will reveal, despite very interesting and significant differences in style and tone, all three of these crip writers take a similar approach in constructing themselves as ill or disabled in that they all seek to draw a clear distinction between their physical state and their psychological/spiritual essence. For example, Pope deliberately creates a literary construction of his own disability–a construction in which he creatively fuses his disability with his identity as author in order to forge an identity which negates neither his disability nor his status as a writer. Pope thus

constructs himself, literally, as a crip-author. Similarly, Johnson uses his experience of disability as a philosophical perspective from which to observe the human condition and in this way constructs himself as crip-philosopher. Disability, and its inherent 'suffering,' thus becomes, for Johnson, a philosophical authorization to comment on the human condition–as he does in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and his *Review of Soames Jenyns*. Leapor, on the other hand, is much more focused on the notion of the Body, her body, as the oppressor, and the consequent construction of herself as one who is victimized by her body. This construction of herself as the victim of her body is at the heart of poems such as *The Headache*, *Crumble Hall*, *Advice to Saphonia*, and *Myra's Will*. Hence, Leapor assertively allies herself with the role of Mind in the kind of archetypal conflict between Mind and Body which is illustrated in Elizabeth Carter's "A Dialogue."

Another central question related to identity construction in the works of "crip writers," Pope, Johnson and Leapor is: *In what ways do these authors play with notions of marginalization and Otherness in order to construct themselves as different from, and yet somehow superior to, the rest of society?* As will be demonstrated through the examination of their works, Pope most often does this by consciously constructing himself as a lone defender of virtue in a corrupt society; Johnson does this by privileging the enduring wisdom that is gained through suffering over the temporal knowledge that is gained through often self-centered intellectual pursuits and Leapor does this by deliberately drawing a link

between corporeal confinement through suffering and a transcendent capacity for creative expression.

Questions related to issues of identity construction will also be central to the discussion of written crips created by the non-disabled (TAB) writers, Dickens, Trollope and Eliot. For example: *To what extent do the disabled characters created by these non-disabled authors conform to, or deviate from, the conventional social and medical views of ill and disabled people?* Throughout Dickens' novels we see variations on nineteenth-century stereotypes of disability: Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* as the Good, Daniel Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop* as the Bad, Jenny Wren in *Our Mutual Friend* as the Other. On the other hand, although Trollope's depiction of Madeline Neroni, the licentious, morally-deviant crip in *Barchester Towers*, and of Mary Belton, the virtuous and wise invalid in *The Belton Estate* may, at first glance, appear to fit neatly into the two opposing stereotypes that make up the Monster vs. Supercrip dichotomy, the complexity of character that Trollope develops in both Madeline and Mary blurs the boundaries of this binary and allows these crip characters to move away from their respective stereotypes and begin to emerge as more fully-human entities. Finally, in her portrayal of the frail, sickly and clairvoyant Latimer in her novella "The Lifted Veil" and the moody and deformed artist Philip Wakem in her novel *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot reinforces the conventional Victorian vision of the intrinsic interconnectedness of the individual's mind and body.

A related question which will also be central to this study of written crips created by non-disabled writers is: *How are these nineteenth-century ill and*

disabled characters portrayed in relation to the rest of society? That is, are they seen as detracting from, or enhancing, the lives of those around them? Dickens' Tiny Tim is the archetypal "Charity Cripple," and yet he is also depicted as a valued family member. Quilp is presented as a stereotypical villain, whose physical deformity is an outward sign of an inner corrupting drive to manipulate and control other people. Jenny Wren is clearly and consistently portrayed as the Other–on first entering the narrative, she herself announces three times that her "back is bad ... and legs are queer" (271). Even so, Jenny's stance towards her disability is ultimately proactive; she understands and accepts the fact that her body is fragmented and, therefore, that her access to discourse and textuality is limited. She also senses that this condition has something to do with female desire and with the "he" that will not make her whole again. In this way, Jenny shows herself to be much more akin to Madeline (who categorically refuses to accept any attachment to a man which is based on pity) than she is to Philip, who seems to have no qualms about accepting and perhaps even exploiting Maggie's pity-based love. Trollope depicts a similarly proactive stance towards disability in his portrayals of both Mary Belton in *The Belton Estate* and Madeline Neroni in *Barchester Towers*. Despite her confirmed status as invalid, Mary Belton is portrayed throughout the novel as both a very active and a very positive influence in the lives of those around her. Mrs. Askerton says of Mary, ""I never saw a woman who got more strength out of her weakness" (359). Indeed, from Mary's first appearance in the novel to her last, Trollope clearly and consistently draws a direct connection between her disability and her wisdom and her resulting

capacity to make a positive impact on those around her. On the other hand, Trollope's presentation of Madeline Neroni, while still focused on the character rather than on the disability, seems on some level to revert back to the stereotype of the crip as morally-deviant Other. She is, after all, the dark temptress who for a time disrupts the moral quietude of Barchester. However, a closer examination of the development of Madeline's character throughout the novel reveals that, while she remains clearly marked out as disabled Other, she does not fit as neatly into the stereotype of deviant, "bad" disabled woman as one may at first suppose. When Trollope introduces Madeline into the novel, he tells us two things about her: she is beautiful and she is deformed. It is this paradox of beauty and deformity, desirability and repulsion that defines Madeline's character and entrenches her Otherness. She is neither a villainess nor a pathetic victim nor a Charity Cripple. But whatever she *is*, she is *not normal*. By collapsing the boundaries between her person and her disfigurement, Trollope creates in the reader a certain level of dis-ease about the combination of Madeline's deformity and her overt sexuality. Furthermore, in endowing Madeline with both physical beauty and deformity, Trollope also collapses the conventional stereotypes of the "good"/beautiful and the "bad"/deformed Victorian woman. In direct contrast to Trollope's portrayal of Mary and Madeline as proactive invalids with the power to impact the lives of those around them is Eliot's depiction of Latimer and Philip Wakem as characters whose physical and/or psychological infirmities keep them largely isolated from the rest of society.

The Impact of Crip Writers and Writing Crips on Societal Views of Illness and Disability – Then and Now:

Societal assumptions about illness and disability inform literary representations of illness/disability, which, in turn, reinforce these assumptions and help create stereotypes and/or icons of illness/disability. This is as much a fact of the twenty-first century as it was a fact of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Herein, I believe, lies the ultimate significance of projects such as the one that I am undertaking in this dissertation. Disability Studies, as a relatively new field of academic inquiry, seeks to interrogate and deconstruct the social assumptions and investments that have historically informed both political and cultural representations of persons with disabilities as inherently Other and thus often inherently inferior. I would argue that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century *crip writers* and *written crips* that I will be discussing in the chapters which follow are carrying out the very same sort of interrogation and deconstruction of dominant political, medical and social attitudes which inform literary portrayals of persons with disabilities/illnesses. Therefore, it seems to me an entirely legitimate and worthwhile undertaking to examine these literary portrayals of illness and disability through a Disability Studies lens.

Crip writers, such as Pope, Johnson and Leapor, consciously write from within their own unique corporeal realities in order to raise the level of consciousness among the reading public about what it actually means to have an illness or a disability. Often they deliberately write *against* conventional notions

regarding illness and disability, challenging these notions with their own first-hand experience. Similarly, the *written crips* created by non-disabled authors, namely Dickens, Trollope and Eliot, most often engage conventional stereotypes of illness and disability in some way–either by reinforcing these stereotypes or by deliberately subverting them. Whether these *written crips* embody a stereotype, as does Dickens' Tiny Tim, or challenge a stereotype, as does Trollope's Madeline Neroni, their very prominent roles in the action of the novels that they inhabit can be viewed as a deliberate effort by their authors to foreground issues surrounding the perception of people with illnesses/disabilities in their novels. A thoughtful examination of these *crip writers* and *written crips* will, therefore, yield some very interesting and important insights into the ongoing evolution–or, in some cases, regression–of societal attitudes towards persons with illnesses or disabilities as reflected in literary portrayals of illness or disability. It will thus become evident that a great many of the social biases and stereotypes which formed the basis for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary constructions of illness and disability have remained intact and, indeed, continue to be dominant in the decidedly ableist culture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Chapter Two
Alexander Pope: Crip, Author and Crip-Author

Introduction: Reading Bodies, Reading Pope

Perhaps no literary figure in the eighteenth century is better known for his disability/deformity than Alexander Pope. Although literary critics have, in the past, tended to minimize the significance of Pope's disability in relation to his career as an author, the recent emergence of Disability Studies as a field of academic inquiry has regenerated interest in exploring the kind of impact that the corporeal realities of deformity and disability had on Pope's writing. The last ten years have seen scholars do some very exciting work which has provided important new insights into the social and literary significance of Pope's disability. In particular, Dennis Todd's 1995 study, Imagining *Monsters: Miscreations of the Self in Eighteenth-Century England*, addresses not only the eighteenth-century concept of monstrosity but also the sensibility of the monster in a perceptive analysis of the public and private writings of Pope and of William Hay (born with a twisted back). Although neither Pope nor Hay was a monster of the spectacular variety displayed at fairs and coffeehouses, both described their deformity as "monstrosity" and struggled to disentangle their moral selves from their stunted, gnarled bodies. By showing how Pope and Hay at once protested against and confirmed their culture's stereotypes of how monstrous bodies caused monstrous hearts and minds, Todd offers a rare glimpse into the lived consequences of pinning body and soul together by the imagination. Equally groundbreaking work

is done by Helen Deutsch in her seminal 1996 study, *Resemblance & Disgrace: Alexander Pope and the Deformation of Culture*. In this book Deutsch examines both the fact of Pope's physical deformity and his own self-conscious deployment of it to explore issues of the relation of body to self that are also of wide current interest. She considers how Pope collects fragments of the cultural past, then proceeds to stamp them with his own personal, individual, disfigured image in order to declare his ownership of them. My own exploration of Pope's conflicting identities as Author, Crip and Crip-Author in this chapter is thus indebted to and informed by Todd's work on Pope as Monster and Deutsch's work on Pope's use of his own deformity to expose and explore the deformities of his culture through his poetry. The work of this chapter is to bring together these two approaches and apply them to an examination of the ways in which Pope repeatedly constructs and reconstructs himself as Crip and as Author in order to forge his identity as Crip-Author.

In medical terms, Pope's deformity, a severe and progressive spinal curvature, was the result of Pott's Disease or tuberculosis of the spine. He was barely four and a half feet tall when full grown. In practical terms, Pope's deformity translated into a significant physical disability–a disability which rendered him increasingly dependent on others to assist him with even the most basic tasks of daily living. Arguably the eighteenth century's most prominent poet, Pope was engaged in a lifelong struggle between a vibrant, agile mind and

a misshapen, malfunctioning body–what he himself calls "the crazy shell."[7] This constant tension between his mind and body is, I would argue, a significant source of artistic impetus in much of Pope's work.

Since Pope himself was only too well aware of the fact that his readers, whether friends or foes, had a strong tendency to read his body–specifically his deformity/disability–as a subtext to his works, it stands to reason that he would endeavour to provide within his poetry his own gloss for the subtext of his body. Pope thus consciously uses his physical deformity/disability as a vehicle for self-reflection, self-representation and self-legitimization. Most often, Pope constructs his relationship to his own body as analogous to the combative relationship he, as a defender of Virtue, has with the rest of humanity, which has been utterly corrupted by selfishness. This construction of the physically deformed Pope exposing the true moral depravity of his society is a recurring theme in much of Pope's poetry, perhaps most notably in the *Epilogue to the Satires* and the fourth book of the *Dunciad*. The *Epilogue to the Satires* is essentially a celebration of moral courage and integrity in the face of overwhelming corruption. These heroic diatribes are, at least ostensibly, provoked by the attacks of an amoral yet articulate erstwhile friend who has become an enemy through some act of betrayal. They invariably culminate in an affirmation of the strength, vulnerability and solitude of Virtue. Just as Pope's

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[7]This line is found in the earliest extant manuscripts of Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* as it is reconstructed by John Butt in his essay "Pope's Poetical Manuscripts" which appears in *Essential Articles for the Study of Alexander Pope*, ed. Maynard Mack (Hamden, CT : Archon, 1968), 545-565.

deformity marks him as *physically* set apart from the rest of society, his unflinching commitment to upholding Virtue marks him as *morally* different and thus isolated in a society where corruption has become rampant. An even bleaker vision of the human state is seen in Book Four of the *Dunciad* which ends with the spectacle of disappearance, as "Universal Darkness buries All" (*Dunciad*, IV, 656). This ultimate loss of form is the ultimate expression of deformity. And it is again only the physically deformed Pope who possesses the moral fortitude to write out of and into this "Universal Darkness."

Arguably the two poems within Pope's canon which offer the most fruitful ground for an exploration of the ways in which Pope constructs and reconstructs himself as Crip and as Author in order to forge his identity as Crip-Author are the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and *An Essay on Man*. These are two very different types of poems–one introspective and self-referential, the other didactic and philosophical. Even so, these are the two poems in which Pope deals most extensively with issues of identity and identity-construction. It seems to me that these are the poems which, when examined within the context of eighteenth-century attitudes towards deformity in general and Pope's disability in particular, yield the most interesting and important insights into Pope's endeavours to reconcile the Body with the Mind, the Crip with the Author.

Pope as Crip

His widespread reputation as an extraordinarily talented author notwithstanding, it is Pope's disability that fuels much of the public interest in him

and thus bolsters his status as celebrity. Samuel Johnson, in his *Life of Pope*, provides an unflinchingly detailed description of Pope's physical debility and his consequent dependence upon others:

> THE person of Pope is well known not to have been formed by the nicest model. He has, in his account of the "Little Club," compared himself to a spider, and by another is described as protuberant behind and before. He is said to have been beautiful in his infancy; but he was of a constitution originally feeble and weak, and as bodies of a tender frame are easily distorted his deformity was probably in part the effect of his application. His stature was so low that, to bring him to a level with common tables, it was necessary to raise his seat. But his face was not displeasing, and his eyes were animated and vivid.
>
> By natural deformity or accidental distortion his vital functions were so much disordered that his life was a "long disease." His most frequent assailant was the headach, which he used to relieve by inhaling the steam of coffee, which he very frequently required.
>
> Most of what can be told concerning his petty peculiarities was communicated by a female domestick of the Earl of Oxford, who knew him perhaps after the middle of life. He was then so weak as to stand in perpetual need of female attendance; extremely sensible of cold, so that he wore a kind of fur doublet under a shirt of very coarse warm linen with fine sleeves. When he rose he was invested in a boddice made of stiff canvass, being scarce able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat. One side was contracted. His legs were so slender that he enlarged their bulk with three pair of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid; for he was not able to dress or undress himself, and neither went to bed nor rose without help. His weakness made it very difficult for him to be clean. (Johnson, vol. 3, 196-197)

Johnson's delineation of the specific characteristics of Pope's disability, its origins and its effect on his personality as well as his daily life is indicative of the struggle that Pope faces as he endeavours to reconcile physical infirmity with authorial power. Repeatedly Johnson uses words such as "feeble" and "weak" to

emphasize Pope's physical infirmity and consequent neediness. This strong and sustained focus on Pope's small stature, frail constitution and "perpetual need [for] female attendance" grates against the popular image of Pope as the dignified Man of Letters. As Helen Deutsch points out:

> In Johnson's portrait, Pope's body disempowers him, puts him eternally in a highchair, "in perpetual need of female attendance." Johnson must reanchor Pope's unnatural origins–the narrative of authorial self-engendering evidenced by the reader's vision of his disability–in the realm of the body now branded explicitly as feminine or feminizing. He brands the poet's "person" a blotched work of art, a poor imitation not "formed by the nicest model." The faultiness of the model is explained as "in part the effect of his application"; in other words, according to Johnson, Pope distorted his own body through excessive literary efforts. Johnson goes on to state that the "indulgence" which Pope demanded in his weakness "had taught him all the unpleasing and unsocial qualities of a valetudinary man," and takes that marginalization implied by his comparison one step further: "He expected that every thing should give way to his ease or humour, as a child whose parents will not hear her cry has an unresisted dominion in the nursery." From infantilized invalid to female infant, Pope's authorial power takes shape in Johnson's text as bodily powerlessness. By attributing Pope's deformity to his authorial labor, Johnson paradoxically deprives Pope of any authority over the products of that labor, in much the same way as a translator is deprived of any authority over his original. (Deutsch, 34)

Because Pope's disability exhibited itself as a physical deformity, his detractors categorize him as *defective* and thus not only infantilized but also morally suspect. The young Joshua Reynolds says of Pope, ".... there was an appearance about his mouth which is found only in the deformed, and from which he [Reynolds] could have known him to be deformed" (Deutsch, 20). Deutsch comments that, "This curiously verbal vision portrays an almost contaminating

collusion between literature and life: Pope's voracious reading distorts his face; his face resembles heroic oratory" (21). Thus categorized as one of "the deformed," Pope is viewed by foes and friends alike as an Other. His foes interpret his deformity as the physical manifestation of his willfulness and consequent moral corruption. To them he is a Monster–inside and out. This is the stance taken by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in her satirical poem, *Verses Addressed to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book Of Horace*, where she writes of her erstwhile friend:

> It was the equity of righteous Heav'n,
> That such a soul to such a form was giv'n;
> And shows the uniformity of fate,
> That one so odious should be born to hate. (Montagu, 266)

Pope's friends, on the other hand, interpret his deformity as the mark of his courage and valour, a mark which identifies him as a Supercrip. This more "sympathetic" attitude towards Pope's disability remains prominent in much twentieth-century criticism. Norman Ault, writes:

> Sensitive and perceptive beyond the ordinary as Pope was, it is only too likely that his desire for perfection sprang up and drew its miraculous growth from his bitter realization during the formative years of adolescence, of how much he was doomed to be deprived of a man's rightful heritage, not only of health and strength and physical endurance, but also–and more tragically–of ordinary human stature and shape. (6)

What is interesting about the reading of Pope represented in this passage is the fact that his disability becomes the single element by which his entire identity is defined. His desires, actions and reactions can, according to this interpretation, all be traced back to a deep-seated need to compensate–or perhaps

over-compensate–for the fact that his disability/deformity marks him out as an Other, depriving him of the health, strength and stature that is "a man's rightful heritage." In this reading, Pope's deformity/disability is decidedly *tragic* in that it excludes him from the community of normalcy, a community to which all *real* men–and certainly a Man of Letters–ought to belong. Thus deprived of his *rightful* place in society, if not humanity, Pope is driven to become a Supercrip in order to gain access to this able-bodied, *normal* society, though he remains one of "the deformed."

In response to these kinds of unsympathetic and "sympathetic" readings of his body, Pope himself consciously constructs his deformity/disability and consequent Other-ness as an authorization to expose the moral monstrosity and corruption of those around him. He presents himself to his readers as a rebel crip with a cause–namely, to be a lone defender of Virtue in an often overwhelmingly corrupt society. And in doing so he asserts his agency as Crip and as Author. Pope thus demonstrates great shrewdness in turning his position as Othered Crip into a position of power. By freely acknowledging his own monstrous tendencies, as he does in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, and by illustrating the universality of such tendencies among humans, as he does in his *Essay on Man*, Pope is able to present his own moral shortcomings as proof of his humanity while at the same time demonstrating the dangers of such monstrous tendencies.

Pope as Author

Pope invests a great deal in his identity as Author, for it is through his authorial persona that he is able to shift the public focus away from his deformity/disability and onto his literary talents. The authorial persona that Pope constructs for himself and presents to his readers is based equally on his own literary talents and his acceptance by and into at least one faction of the established literary community: "Happy my studies, when by these approv'd! / Happier their author, when by these belov'd! / From these the world will judge of men and books, / Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes" (*Arbuthnot*, ll. 143-146). Although marked as an outsider by both his deformity and his Catholicism, Pope's acceptance into the inner circle of distinguished and honourable men of letters gives him full legitimacy as an author. He draws and maintains a very sharp distinction between those established authors who have the generosity and integrity to accept him and his work, as opposed to other members of the literati who remain prejudiced against him because of his deformity as well as his Catholicism. He is thus able to criticize the hypocrisy of the latter group of authors from the position of outsider, while at the same time citing his acceptance by the former group of authors as giving weight and credence to his criticisms.

Another integral part of Pope's strategy for reinforcing the legitimacy of his identity as an Author is to recount the hardships that he must continually endure for the sake of his vocation. In his *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* he chronicles the trials and tribulations inflicted on him by the throng of would-be authors who

relentlessly bombard him, as a now established author, with requests for favours. Repeatedly, he depicts these dogged would-bes as raving lunatics and ruthless monsters. He refers to "Bedlam" and "Parnassus" in the first verse-paragraph, making it clear that these are not just a group of pesky neophytes supplicating for favours from an established author, but rather, they are asylum escapees–raving monsters–who launch a military-style assault against him, "They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide; / By land, by water, they renew the charge; / They stop the chariot, and they board the barge" (ll. 8-10). Not only are his assailants mad and monstrous, they are even more startlingly *pagan*, for "No place is sacred, not the church is free; / Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me" (ll. 11-12). By thus depicting himself as a continual target for the attacks of a mad, monstrous and malevolent mob of would-be authors, Pope dramatizes his dedication to his vocation despite its very real risks to personal comfort if not safety. Such a demonstration of dedication serves to reinforce the legitimacy of his identity as Author.

As he reflects on the trials that come with being an Author, Pope is led to contemplate more broadly on his calling as a Poet:

> Why did I write? what sin to me unknown
> Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?
> As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
> I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.
> (*Arbuthnot*, ll. 125-128)

He sees himself as both doomed and destined to life as a Poet. Writing has become, for him, an inescapable compulsion, "Why am I ask'd what next shall see the light? / Heav'ns! was I born for nothing but to write? / Has life no joys for

me? or (to be grave) / Have I no friend to serve, no soul to save?" (*Arbuthnot*, ll. 271-274). Indeed, there is within these lines a sense of the "desire for perfection" that Norman Ault writes about. It would seem that Pope's efforts to gain access to the able-bodied, *normal* society through his vocation as Author have become enormously successful. And yet these lines resonate with Pope's very palpable frustration with his apparent inability to transcend his identity as Author and Crip and finally be recognized as a fully-human being rather than just a prodigy or a freakish writing-machine. It is the fact that Pope here is seen to struggle just as much with his identity as Author as he struggles with his identity as Crip that ultimately brings out his true humanness to his readers.

Despite such moments of struggle and the trials that he repeatedly faces in his vocation as Author, Pope continues to assert that the life of a poet–particularly a poet of integrity–is the best life a person could wish for: "Oh let me live my own! and die so too! / ("To live and die is all I have to do:") / Maintain a poet's dignity and ease, / And see what friends, and read what books I please" (*Arbuthnot*, ll. 261-264). To be, and be seen as, a Gentleman Poet remains Pope's greatest ambition.

Although *An Essay on Man*, unlike the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, contains no explicit references to Pope as Poet, it is clearly self-expressive without being self-referential. In his essay "Rhetoric and *An Essay on Man*," Simon Varey provides a succinct overview of the range of listeners against whom Pope seeks to construct himself as authoritative poet and the type of rhetoric that this varied audience necessitates:

> The poet's character is in fact consistent where that of his audience is not, for he speaks to a wide range, from philosopher to fool, from proud to humble. In the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* Pope uses dialogue to put himself in a favourable light; in the *Essay on Man* he uses a variety of forms, none more effectively than questions, for the same purpose. (Varey, 137-138)

Behind Pope's strategic use of several different types of rhetoric–from philosophical discourse to vernacular speech–in addressing his varied audience may be seen his self-conscious construction of himself as skillful rhetorician and philosopher and thus as authoritative Author. Through his masterful use of language Pope is able to give both breadth and depth to his arguments by approaching the issues that he raises from many different perspectives, ranging from universal to personal. This kind of virtuoso rhetorical and literary performance goes a long way in reinforcing Pope's legitimacy and authority as Author.

Though an exception to the overall tenor of the poem, the obtrusively personal passages at the beginning and end of *An Essay on Man* may in fact be indicative of a more pervasive self-expressiveness. Pope begins this poem by consciously taking on the position of omniscient Author:

> Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things
> To low ambition, and the pride of kings.
> Let us (since life can little more supply
> Than just to look about us and to die)
> Expatiate free o'er all this scene of man;
> A mighty maze! but not without a plan;
> A wild, where weeds and flow'rs promiscuous shoot;
> Or garden, tempting with forbidden fruit.
> Together let us beat this ample field,
> Try what the open, what the covert yield;
> The latent tracts, the giddy heights explore

> Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;
> Eye Nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,
> And catch the manners living as they rise;
> Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
> But vindicate the ways of God to man.
> (*An Essay on Man*, ll. 1-16)

Pope's use of a first-person authorial voice in this first verse-paragraph enables him to establish clearly an authoritative authorial presence in the poem. Taking on the position of omniscient Author, he confidently sets out to "vindicate the ways of God to man." In this bold declaration of purpose, Pope is, of course, deliberately echoing his direct predecessor as a Crip-Author, John Milton, who, in his best-known work, *Paradise Lost*, sets out to "justify the ways of God to men" (*PL*, 1:26). It is significant that Milton himself begins Book III of *Paradise Lost* by explicitly constructing his own physical blindness as a source of spiritual insight:

> In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
> Through utter and through middle darkness borne
> With other notes then to th' ORPHEAN Lyre
> I sung of CHAOS and ETERNAL NIGHT,
> Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
> The dark descent, and up to reascend,
> Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,
> And feel thy sovran vital Lamp; but thou
> Revisit'st not these eyes, that rowle in vain
> To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
> So thick a drop serene hath quencht thir Orbs,
> Or dim suffusion veild. Yet not the more
> Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt
> Cleer Spring, or shadie Grove, or Sunnie Hill,
> Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
> Thee SION and the flowrie Brooks beneath
> That wash thy hallowd feet, and warbling flow,
> Nightly I visit: nor somtimes forget
> Those other two equal'd with me in Fate,
> So were I equal'd with them in renown,
> Blind THAMYRIS and blind MAEONIDES,
> And TIRESIAS and PHINEUS Prophets old.

> Then feed on thoughts, that voluntarie move
> Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird
> Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid
> Tunes her nocturnal Note. Thus with the Year
> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or Summers Rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
> But cloud in stead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men
> Cut off, and for the book of knowledg fair
> Presented with a Universal blanc
> Of Natures works to mee expung'd and ras'd,
> And wisdome at one entrance quite shut out.
> So much the rather thou Celestial light
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight. (*PL*, III, 15-55)

Milton here aligns himself with "Blind THAMYRIS and blind MAEONIDES," ancients poets whose physical blindness becomes a means of access to a level of spiritual truth that is beyond the reach of most ordinary, able-bodied people. Similarly, Pope uses this Miltonic allusion in *An Essay on Man* to consciously place himself within a literary tradition of Authors whose physical infirmities rendered them able to "see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight."

However, even in the midst of such lofty authorial pursuits, Pope demonstrates a characteristic preoccupation with the notion of disease/disability as a metonymic representation of the universal human condition in a fallen world. He thus envisions humanity as creatures deformed and debilitated by pride and vanity so that they can only "blindly creep or sightless soar" along the "mighty maze" that is the span of earthly life. And although Pope makes no explicit reference to his own disability in this poem, his widespread reputation as one of

"the deformed" was sure to cause these initial images of disability to have a strong resonance in the minds of most readers.

In the same way, with his return to a first-person authorial voice in Epistle IV, Pope brings his authorial contemplation of the universal state of humanity back down to an individual and personal level. He directly addresses Bolingbroke: "Tell (for you can) what is it to be wise?" Yet, while these lines are addressed to Bolingbroke, Pope might apply them to himself as well. Were he not destined to suffer the loneliness of genius, "Condemn'd in business or in arts to drudge / Without a second, or without a judge," he would have shared with Bolingbroke the "Painful preheminence" of having many people fear him and yet few truly understand him. In this way Pope uses his position as Author to once again locate himself within a social context which is part of the universal order.

Just as in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope concludes *An Essay on Man* with an affirmation of the virtue of his vocation as Author:

> Shall then this verse to future age pretend
> Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?
> That urg'd by thee, I turn'd the tuneful art
> From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart;
> For Wit's false mirror held up Nature's light;
> Shew'd erring Pride, whatever is, is right;
> That Reason, Passion, answer one great aim;
> That true Self-Love and Social are the same;
> That Virtue only makes our bliss below;
> And all our knowledge is, ourselves to know.
> (*An Essay on Man* IV, ll. 389-398)

What Pope tries to do in *An Essay on Man*, therefore, is to locate the "recurrent [personal] concerns of [his] imagination" within a universal schema (Griffin, 131). One of Pope's main concerns in this poem is to attempt to understand, if not

reconcile, the incongruities that exist within human nature. Significantly, we find within *An Essay on Man* two very different conceptions of human personality. In Epistles I and II, we see an anxious, skeptical view of man as divided against himself or united merely by an unsettling and potentially deadly mental disease–his ruling passion. He is thus isolated from others because he has become trapped in his own private fantasy. In Epistles III and IV, on the other hand, we are given a more reassuring view of man as having been cured of "self-love" and consequently having developed the capacity for an all-embracing "social-love" as well as a rediscovered openness to the workings of virtue as it manifests itself in benevolence. Viewed in this way, *An Essay on Man* is at once a compendium of standard moral generalizations about the state of humanity and a poem in which Pope is able to create a clear and forceful expression both of his worst fears about himself and his carefully-constructed idealized authorial image. Ultimately, Pope both views and presents himself as an Author by vocation–that is, one who has received a divine calling to defend Truth and Virtue through his poems. By thus foregrounding his vocation as Author, Pope skillfully undermines the efforts of his detractors to highlight his physical deformity as evidence of his moral corruption and thus to negate his authorial authority.

Pope as Crip-Author

In order for Pope to successfully refute his enemies' charges that his outward deformity is evidence of his inner corruption, it is crucial that he construct an authorial image for himself that incorporates his disability as a

source of moral insight and authority rather than a destabilizing threat to his position as Author. The opening couplet of the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* highlights a dis-ease inherent in Pope's ongoing efforts to synthesize his literarily acrobatic mind with his deformed and disabled body. Besieged by a mad throng of would-be Authors, Pope is forced to turn genuine sickness into hyperbolic death, "Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd, I said, / Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead" (ll. 1-2). From this position of ostensible vulnerability, he assumes the heroic role of Supercrip, taking up a valiant struggle to defend himself against this violent, relentless onslaught of clamouring upstart writers.

In the third verse-paragraph of the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope deliberately inverts the Monster/Supercrip binary in order to engage and refute the popular perception among his enemies that he, being deformed in mind as well as body, is a Monster:

> Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the laws,
> Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause:
> Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,
> And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope. (ll. 23-26)

Pope is viewed as Monster by those who impute to him the folly and immorality of others. As Monster-Author, his writing is seen as a corrupting influence, enticing others to commit monstrous acts. Of course, the references to Arthur's "giddy son" and Cornus' "frantic wife" make it implicitly clear where these monstrous acts have their true origins. Nevertheless, what Pope does in these lines must be considered a bold strategic move against his detractors; rather than simply ignoring their attack, or dismissing it out of hand, he directly engages

the charge that his physical deformity–or monstrosity–is an outward sign of his moral corruption, a corruption with which he is only too eager to infect others through his poetry.

Pope reasserts his role as Supercrip-Author in the fourth verse-paragraph by depicting himself as Defender of Honesty and Virtue, a beleaguered yet steadfast Supercrip: "Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I! / Who can't be silent, and who will not lie" (*Arbuthnot*, ll. 33-34). Besieged though he is, hunchbacked though he is, he remains determined to *stand up*–figuratively at least–for Truth and Virtue. And it is because of his commitment to uphold Truth amidst crookedness and corruption that Pope finds himself "wretched," as one who "can't be silent, and who will not lie." There is a sense that Pope is a suffering Supercrip, one who is *afflicted* by a "dire dilemma" between "a fool's wrath or love." Though he enacts the role of Supercrip-Author, Pope remains constantly conscious of his vulnerability as a virtuous crip in a corrupt able-bodied world. Arbuthnot fills the role of trusted ally and advisor who admonishes Pope to restrain his monstrous impulses towards his enemies. However just his commitment to Honesty and Virtue as Supercrip may be, Pope himself clearly remains both aware of, and troubled by, his monstrous tendencies towards his enemies, for he declares that "father held it for a rule, / It was a sin to call our neighbor fool" (*Arbuthnot*, ll. 382-383). As Dennis Todd, in his book *Imagining Monsters*, points out, "In [this] single couplet ... Pope seems to protest against the easy accusation about monstrosity and at the same time to admit that there is something monstrous in his behavior" (Todd, 240).

A few lines later, Pope figures himself ironically as a tragic hero "languishing in bed." The irony is, of course, aimed primarily at those fawning flatterers who court Pope's favour by spinning his physical limitations into noble and heroic virtues. However, there is also an element of self-deprecating humour in these lines, as Pope comically envisions his own deathbed with the throng of flatterers gathered round, assuring him that his physical frailties are really marks of distinction which link him to the great literary figures of the past–"Just so immortal Maro held his head" (line 122). In this way, Pope puts an ironic spin on his own preferred self-construction, namely that of Supercrip-Author.

Reflecting further on his vocation as Author, Pope depicts himself as a kind of hybrid Monster/Supercrip:

> I left no calling for this idle trade,
> No duty broke, no father disobey'd.
> The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife,
> To help me through this long disease, my life,
> (ll. 129-132)

Both doomed and destined to life as a writer, he must come to terms with the fact that, just as his disease/disability places him just outside the normal life-cycle that binds others around him, his vocation as a writer further excludes him from the comfortable community of *normalcy*. The only compensation that he receives for these losses and exclusions is that "The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife, / To help me through this long disease, my life" (ll. 131-132). In this most often quoted couplet related to Pope and disability, Pope creatively transforms his disability into the structuring metaphor for his life.

The notion of disease as metaphor recurs in various forms throughout Pope's poetry. One of the most interesting and significant instances where Pope uses disease as metaphor comes in Epistle II of *An Essay on Man*. In keeping with the universal perspective of this poem, as opposed to the overtly personal tenor of the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, images of disease that were clearly self-referential in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* are universalized in *An Essay on Man*:

> As Man, perhaps, the moments of his breath,
> Receives the lurking principle of death;
> The young disease, that must subdue at length,
> Grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength:
> So, cast and mingled with his very frame,
> The Mind's disease, its ruling Passion came;
> Each vital humour which should feed the whole,
> Soon flows to this, in body and in soul.
> Whatever warms the heart, or fills the head,
> As the mind opens, and its functions spread,
> Imagination plies her dang'rous art,
> And pours it all upon the peccant part.
> (*An Essay on Man* ll. 133-44)

In this passage, as in so many other places in his poetry, Pope uses disease as a metaphor for all that is psychologically, spiritually and morally wrong with humanity. For example, in drawing an analogy equating the ruling passion with "the lurking principle of death" and the ultimately mortal "disease" from which all of humanity suffers, Pope implies that the ruling passion finally destroys the man himself–that is, all of his moral functions–thus totally dehumanizing him. Pope thus uses the concept of disease to create a very powerful image of the ruling passion as a kind of raging cancer that destroys everything in its path and man as its helpless victim.

Later in this same Epistle of *An Essay on Man*, Pope reinforces the notion of man being totally dominated and dehumanized by his ruling passion:

> The learn'd is happy nature to explore,
> The fool is happy that he knows no more;
> The rich is happy in the plenty giv'n,
> The poor contents him with the care of Heav'n.
> (*An Essay on Man* ll. 263-66)

Subsequently, the ruling passion's domination of man is shown to have decidedly sinister connotations:

> See the blind beggar dance, the cripple sing,
> The sot a hero, lunatic a king;
> The starving chemist in his golden views
> Supremely blest, the poet and his muse.
> (*An Essay on Man* ll. 267-270)

If we take seriously the notion that Pope's mention of a "singing cripple" is probably a self-referential allusion to his position as Crip-Author, we must engage the question of how this image informs, and/or is informed by, Pope's view of his own disability vis-a-vis his vocation as Author. As with the previously-discussed passages of the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* in which Pope reflects on his literary calling, there is a sense of fatalism–or at least compulsion–in these lines. The blind beggar dances and the cripple sings not merely out of artistic impulse but rather because they are compelled by a tyrannical ruling passion, one that feeds on the moral weakness specific to people with disabilities, namely a passion for self-display. It seems reasonable to infer that, in Pope's case, this passion for spectacle is translated into a passion for poetry.

As we have already seen, the concept of locating personal concerns within a universal context is a crucial element in Pope's construction of himself as

Crip-Author in *An Essay on Man*. This strategy is once again clearly demonstrated in the following well-known passage from Epistle II:

> Know thou thyself, presume not God to scan;
> The proper study of Mankind is Man.
> Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
> A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
> With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
> He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
> In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;
> In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer,
> Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
> Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
> Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
> Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;
> Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
> Created half to rise, and half to fall;
> Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
> Sole judge of truth, in endless Error hurl'd:
> The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!
> (*An Essay on Man II.* 1-18)

Although this verse-paragraph is ostensibly a description of the universal state of fallen humanity, its self-expressive elements are too striking to be ignored. The dichotomy of body and mind implicit in Pope's description of man as being "In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer" is intrinsic to his treatment of self-construction in his poetry, for it gives expression to the frustration he himself feels at being trapped in a crazy carcass–a body that was such a terrible mismatch for his furtive and agile mind. Faced with a lifetime of having to come to grips with this fundamental incongruity within his being, who but Pope might so authoritatively describe man as a "Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd"? The poem may, therefore, be seen in some sense as an autobiographical metaphor–an attempt by an acutely self-conscious, self-centered poet to use the impersonal

forms of didacticism and philosophical discourse in order to formulate a coherent view of his split identity as Crip-Author.

What we ultimately see emerging from Pope's discussions of his position as Crip-Author in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and *An Essay on Man* is an ongoing effort to bring together two seemingly incongruous identities. As one of "the deformed," Pope is at best a deprived and driven Supercrip or, at worst, a morally corrupt and corrupting Monster. As a talented and distinguished Man of Letters, however, he is a public celebrity, welcomed into a congenial community of Authors and courted or harassed by an endless mob of upstart writers. To attempt to merge these two personas together into a coherent identity is indeed an undertaking fraught with difficulty. Yet, it seems to me that in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and *An Essay on Man* Pope, to a large extent, succeeds in this endeavour. By engaging both the Monster and Supercrip stereotypes in these two poems Pope is able to present himself to his readers as neither Monster or Supercrip, but rather as a kind of hybrid of the two–a hybrid in which Pope confronts his own monstrosity while affirming his identity as Crip-Author.

Chapter Three
Samuel Johnson: Written Writer, Unwritten Crip

Introduction: Writing Johnson's Unwritten Disability

Like Pope, Johnson was one of the eighteenth century's best-known and most prolific literary figures, and one who just happened to be a crip. Indeed, from a quantitative standpoint, Johnson's list of disabilities is much longer than Pope's:

> He was blind in one eye and had poor vision in the other. He was also deaf in one ear. These disabilities were the result of childhood tuberculosis of the lymphatic system, known then as "scrofula" ... Johnson was also intermittently mentally ill, suffering from profound, often debilitating depression ... In addition he evidenced what might be diagnosed as an obsessive-compulsive disorder that manifested itself in hypochondria, phobic and ritualistic behaviors, compulsive picking of the skin on his hands, crushing anxiety attacks, and so on. (Davis, 54)

However, although Johnson is to a large extent defined by his disability, he, unlike Pope, is never, in any official capacity, allowed to have it. The most probable reason for this is, that his disability is not exclusively physical but rather includes emotional and psychological aspects that are virtually impossible to integrate into the public and historic image of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Creator of the English Dictionary and literary icon. Consequently, the tendency among historians and literary critics has been to exclude what they cannot comfortably integrate into the conventional image of the great Dr. Johnson.

Nevertheless, evidence of both the significance of Johnson's disability and its impact on his works can be seen in Boswell's definitive biography of Johnson as

well as in many of Johnson's own biographical and philosophical works, perhaps most notably the *Life of Pope* (1781), the *Life of Savage* (1744), his review of Soames Jenyns' *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1757), and the *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). As one reads the *Life of Johnson*, it becomes apparent that one of the most significant challenges facing Boswell, as Johnson's biographer, is to find some way to recuperate as many of his physical and psychological idiosyncracies as possible into an overall schema in which Johnson is constructed as a suffering, yet triumphant, Supercrip. Similarly, in reading these four representative works by Johnson, works which span the length of his literary career, one sees Johnson repeatedly and consistently endeavouring to create meaning out of his own fragmented identity by making these works venues for the construction and reconstruction of identities. Both Boswell and Johnson can thus be seen as participating in and seeking to influence the process by which Johnson's ostensibly unwritten and unreadable corporeal and psychological frailties and foibles are inscribed with meaning. If the central dilemma of Pope's career was to find ways to prevent his identity as Crip from negating his identity as Author, the central dilemma of Johnson's career is to create a space where his identity as Author need not prevent his Crip-ness from being written.

The Hidden, Yet Heroic, Crip in Boswell's Life of Johnson

As Johnson's premier biographer, James Boswell's attitude towards Johnson's disabilities may best be described as ranging from celebratory to evasive. Although Boswell's stated objective in his *Life of Johnson* is to "delineate him without reserve..." to present him "as he really was" (1:27), he generally seems to feel the need to provide some sort of gloss for Johnson's often unreadable body. This is not to say that Boswell altogether seeks to avoid dealing with the corporeal as well as the psychological realities of Johnson's disabilities. In fact, he does not shrink from telling his readers about Johnson's "morbid melancholy" (1:63) and its accompanying indolence, both of which are linked to "a defect in his nervous system" (1:64). Through the relation of a few "characteristick" anecdotes, Boswell illustrates the severity of Johnson's hypochondria, a "dismal malady" that "made existence misery ... [so that] all his labours, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence" (1:63-64). Boswell blurs the distinction between mental and physical disorders to the point where the two are inextricably linked, making each representative of the other. The fact that Boswell feels compelled to blur the distinction between mental and physical disorders is, it seems to me, indicative of a certain uncomfortableness, a dis-ease, when it comes to integrating Johnson's emotional and psychological disabilities into his identity as Author.

Boswell's main strategy for dealing with those instances when his narrative of Johnson the Author unavoidably clashes with the corporeal and/or

psychological manifestations of Johnson the Crip is to cast Johnson as a heroic Supercrip who is engaged in a constant battle, first of all, against the foibles and frailties of his own body, and also against the misinterpretations and misjudgements of a unsympathetic public. In his essay, "Disability, Disease, and the 'Philosophick Heroism' of Samuel Johnson in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*," Donald J. Newman examines Boswell's presentation of Johnson's physical appearance and the reactions it elicited from the people around him:

> The people with whom Johnson came into contact were repelled by his "strange and somewhat uncouth" appearance (4:425). When young, he had a "very forbidding" appearance" (1:94). "[H]is immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye" (1:94), and he was often twitching with "convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule" (1:95). He was so severely afflicted physically that "he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs: when he walked, it was like the struggling gait of one in fetters" (4:425) ... His own school failed partly because his peculiarities were such a "subject of merriment" that his pupils lacked respect for him and would peep through the keyhole of his bedroom door "that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fondness for Mrs. Johnson" (1:98). At least one application for a schoolmaster's position was rejected because, as Alexander Pope recorded in a note, "He has an Infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes, so as to make Him a sad Spectacle" (1:143). (Newman, 9)

Newman goes on to point out that, by supplying all this information about Johnson's infirmities so early on in his narrative, Boswell creates a milieu in which every subsequent allusion to any physical or mental condition evokes indelible images of Johnson's complex bodily distresses and thus colours the reader's responses to the events being narrated. Boswell's treatment of

Johnson's eyesight is a good example of this. A few pages into the narrative, Boswell illustrates just how bad his eyesight really is with an anecdote about Johnson as a child:

> One day, when the servant who used to be sent to school to conduct him home, had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted, that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel before he ventured to step over it. (1:39).

Like most other Johnson critics, however, Newman does not comment on Boswell's conclusion of this anecdote, a conclusion which shows Johnson in a less heroic, though decidedly more human, light:

> His school-mistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn about and perceive her. Feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her, as well as his strength would permit. (1:39)

What makes this conclusion to Boswell's anecdote significant is that it highlights, in vivid and memorable terms, the discrepancy between Johnson, the great Man of Letters, and Johnson, the nearsighted and somewhat pathetic, crip. When Johnson discovers that his school-mistress is following him because she views him as a helpless invalid in need of protection, he interprets her action as "an insult to his manliness." Here is the first glimpse that Boswell gives us of an emerging schism between the way that Johnson views himself and the way that he is viewed by those around him. But perhaps an even more telling indication of this schism is Boswell's description of Johnson's explosive reaction to this perceived offense: "he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her, as well as his

strength would permit." The implication is that "rage" and physical violence ("[he] beat her") is a legitimate, perhaps even required, response to such a perceived insult to one's manliness–even for a three-year-old. Still, there remains in this concluding image of Boswell's anecdote a clear sense of the existence of an emerging schism between the young Man-of-Letters-in-the-making and the pathetic young crip.

From this point forward, readers are unable to forget that whatever Boswell's Johnson is doing, he is doing it despite eyesight so weak he cannot see the ground at his feet. This sense of Johnson's disability is subtly amplified and reinforced by scattered references to Johnson's poor sight. Newman argues that Boswell uses the same technique with every one of Johnson's physical disabilities, reminding readers of the "native fortitude" (4:415) and "dignity of character" (2:67) it took for Johnson to leave the security and privacy of his chambers and venture among the unsympathetic public (Newman, 10). Boswell reports that even Johnson's future wife was at first put off by his appearance, but was so "engaged by his conversation that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, 'this is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life'" (1:94-95). Although certain astute and prominent individuals are likewise able to see beyond Johnson's "external disadvantages" and recognize his true genius, Boswell makes it clear that, regardless of Johnson's true genius, it is his "external disadvantages" which capture and maintain the interest of those around him. For instance, while talking with author Samuel Richardson, the well-known painter William Hogarth

> perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was an ideot, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr. Richardson, as a very good man. To his great surprise, however, the figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr. Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument ... he displayed such a power of eloquence, that Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that this ideot had been at the moment inspired. (1:47)

Like Hogarth, Frances Burney is also very cognizant of the spectacle Johnson made in company:

> he has naturally a noble figure; tall, stout, grand and authoritative: but he stoops horribly, his back is quite round: his mouth is continually opening and shutting, as if he were chewing something; he has a singular method of twirling his fingers and twisting his hands: his vast body is in constant agitation, see-sawing backwards and forwards: his feet are never a moment quiet; and his whole great person looked often as if it were going to roll itself, quite voluntarily, from his chair. (Burney, 2:91)

These anecdotes provide a clear and succinct illustration of the problematic, almost schizophrenic, nature of Johnson's identity as Author/Crip and authored crip. While Hogarth expresses this schism within Johnson's identity through the notion of Johnson as an "inspired ideot," Burney juxtaposes what seems to be an involuntary distortion of a "naturally" noble figure (stooping and "constant agitation") with the vision of a body with a will of its own, leaving the great mind at its mercy. Both thus delineate the fault-line that lies at the centre of Johnson's identity as Crip-Author. As Helen Deutsch explains:

> In the context of Boswell's *Life*, this vision of the great man is profoundly disorienting, since here the objectifying eye scrutinizes not the physical antics of a known genius but

> rather Johnson's defining and usually disembodied trait, his eloquence. To label Johnson an "inspired ideot" is to make his speech, rather than his tics, the product of another. This shift in perspective is not to argue for the body's agency, rather such a reframing reveals the illusory nature of an attempt to define and identify agency (Deutsch, 202).

Deutsch identifies the fault-line dividing Johnson the Author from Johnson the Crip as linguistic–that is, the line between verbal eloquence and inarticulate repetitions. It is therefore not Johnson's physical limitations and psychological frailties in and of themselves which threaten to destabilize his identity as Author, but rather the ultimate unreadability of these frailties and foibles.

It falls to Boswell, as Johnson's biographer, to find some way of making meaning out of Johnson's inscrutable movements and utterances. This Boswell attempts in a passage, uneasily sectioned off from the flow of the narrative, which enacts a series of contradictory impulses toward interpretation, moving from minute and random singularities to the positing of meaning and intention through a metaphor that enforces Johnson's superiority in conversation:

> That the minute singularities which belonged to him, and made very observable parts of his appearance and manner, may not be omitted, it is requisite to mention, that while talking or even musing as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards and forwards, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction, with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud, sometimes giving half a whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly under his breath, too, too, too: all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally

> when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a Whale. This I suppose was a relief to the lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind ... I am fully aware how very obvious an occasion I here give for the sneering jocularity of such as have no relish of an exact likeness; which, to render complete, he who draws it must not disdain the slightest strokes. But if witlings should be inclined to attack this account, let them have the candour to quote what I have offered in my defense. (1:485-486)

The bizarre behaviors which Boswell describes in this passage would, today, almost certainly be diagnosed as symptoms of Tourette's syndrome. However, without having recourse to this kind of twenty-first century medical model, Boswell is faced with the seemingly impossible task of making readable both physical and psychological behaviors which are, for all intents and purposes, illegible. Boswell endeavours to do this by ascribing intention to apparently random behaviors. For example, Boswell tells us that "Generally when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a Whale." He then puts forward his own reading of Johnson's behavior, "This I suppose was a relief to the lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind." This approach is characteristic of Boswell's preferred method, as a biographer, for dealing with the inevitable manifestations of Johnson's disabilities; when confronted with irrefutable evidences of the "severity" of Johnson's disabilities–the all-encompassing nature of his crip-

ness–and its essential incompatibility with his public persona as the Great Man of Letters, Boswell seeks to provide his own lexicon for Johnson's ostensibly unreadable body and behavior, a lexicon which defines Johnson's physical and psychological frailties and foibles as marks of his status as heroic Supercrip. Although the "severity" of Johnson's "crip-ness" would, under most circumstances, be utterly incompatible with a public identity as Author, his "native fortitude" (4:415) and "dignity of character" (2:67) mark him out as a heroic Supercrip, and thus render him worthy to be publicly exalted as a Great Man of Letters.

Yet this is not to say that Boswell is consistently able to maintain, without slippage, his lexical presentation of Johnson's physical and psychological eccentricities as marks of his status as heroic Supercrip throughout the narrative. There are, in fact, a number of key instances in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* in which Boswell is not quite able to bridge successfully the schism between Johnson, the Crip, and Johnson, the Great Man of Letters. In his essay, "Boswell's Artistry," Carey McIntosh discusses just such an instance:

> Recall [in the *Life of Johnson*] the dinner party of 1778 when a distinguished assemblage is discussing Johnson's manners and abilities before he arrives: these are not common folk but one of the three most famous historians of the eighteenth century (Robertson), the president of the Royal Academy (Reynolds), the Earl of Haddington, and the mother of a Viscount (the Hon. Mrs. Boscawen); but "No sooner did he, of whom we had been thus talking so easily, arrive, than we were all as quiet as a school upon the entrance of the head-master" (3:332). The comparison is a tribute to Johnson's powers of domination and simultaneously a comic reduction of all these dignitaries to

> the condition of schoolchildren, smothering their laughter (McIntosh, 147).

McIntosh's explication of this anecdote told by Boswell encapsulates the ultimate paradox which lies at the center of Johnson's identity as Crip-Author. While Johnson is not yet present, the distinguished assemblage feels itself at liberty to discuss both the abilities and manners–including, presumably, "those peculiarities of manner and that careless table-talk"[8] that were already being used to construct a sensationalized foil for his public persona as England's great literary genius. Once Johnson is actually physically present in the room, however, speculative language–including the speculative language of the biographer–runs up against corporeal and psycho-social reality, and the result is self-imposed repression and, consequently, silence.

Significantly, Boswell's moments of silence as a biographer, although infrequent, most often occur during those times when there is a slippage between Johnson's behaviour and Boswell's preferred reading of him as a heroic supercrip. Isobel Grundy argues that Boswell's moments of silence not only open up a space for speculative readings of Johnson's physical and emotional eccentricities, but also highlight Boswell's need to minimize the significance of such speculative readings in order to maintain authorial control over his subject:

> About some aspects of his friend Boswell is content to report, to hazard a guess, without fully explaining. On Johnson's physical eccentricities he leaves the field wide open for more recent speculation. The same is true of the

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[8]Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, "Samuel Johnson" (1831), in *Critical and Historical Essays*, ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 115.

> sources of Johnson's mental unhappiness and the way it fluctuates from day to day or year to year, if only because Boswell's linking of it with sexual irregularity is withheld until a stage when it appears as it is–a construct appealing to would-be explainers. Johnson's extreme unpredictability in social relations causes ripples of discomfort on the surface of the *Life*, but the more closely Boswell is involved in such incidents the more likely he is to resist the impulse of irritable reaching for fact and reason. Rather than explanation, his preferred technique is to delimit the unsettling effects of such moments by labeling them slight or trivial. (Grundy, 189)

It seems to me that the "ripples of discomfort" in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* that Grundy writes about can, to a great extent, be traced back to the essential schism within Johnson's identity, namely, the schism between his public persona as a nationally-renowned literary genius and the personal realities of his physical and emotional disabilities. As Johnson's social behavior becomes more and more erratic and his emotional and psychological eccentricities become more and more outrageous, Boswell becomes more and more reticent in his presentation of Johnson's crip-ness. One well-known example of Johnson's erratic behavior is the occasion at the Temple Bar involving the drawing up of a will:

> He maintained the dignity and propriety of male succession, in opposition to the opinion of one of our friends, who had that day employed Mr. Chambers to draw his will, devising his estate to his three sisters, in preference to a remote heir male ... I have known him at times exceedingly diverted at what seemed to others a very small sport. He now laughed immoderately, without any reason that we could perceive, at our friend's making his will; called him the TESTATOR, and added, 'I dare say, he thinks he has done a mighty thing. He won't stay till he gets home to his seat in the country, to produce this wonderful deed: he'll call up the landlord of the first inn on the road; and, after a suitable preface upon mortality and the uncertainty of life, will tell him that he

> should not delay making his will; and here, Sir, will he say, is my will, which I have just made, with the assistance of one of the ablest lawyers in the kingdom; and he will read it to him (laughing all the time). He believes he has made this will; but he did not make it: you, Chambers, made it for him. I trust you have had more conscience than to make him say, "being of sound understanding;" ha, ha, ha! I hope he has left me a legacy. I'd have his will turned into verse, like a ballad'
> ... Johnson could not stop his merriment, but continued it all the way till we got without the Temple-gate. He then burst into such a fit of laughter, that he appeared to be almost in a convulsion; and, in order to support himself, laid hold of one of the posts at the side of the foot pavement, and sent forth peals so loud, that in the silence of the night his voice seemed to resound from Temple-bar to Fleet-ditch.
>
> This most ludicrous exhibition of the aweful, melancholy, and venerable Johnson, happened well to counteract the feelings of sadness which I used to experience when parting with him for a considerable time. (2:262)

When, as happens in this Temple-Bar episode, Johnson's antics become too bizarre for Boswell to incorporate them into his construction of Johnson as a heroic Supercrip, he either opts to narrate those incidents as mere happenings, offering little or nothing in the way of editorial comment, or less frequently, he chooses to trivialize those incidents entirely by labeling them as "trifling," but which must be reported in order to preserve his fidelity as a biographer to "true, candid warm admirers of Johnson" (3:190-191). Boswell's infrequent yet memorable use of the second of these approaches is perhaps best exemplified in his deadpan description of an episode that involved the Great Dr. Johnson taking tremendous delight in clearing an artificial cascade of rather disgusting garbage in order to excavate a large, dead cat (3:192). In writing about the Temple-Bar incident, however, we see Boswell, for the most part, using the first of these

approaches. The narrative tone that he adopts and maintains throughout most of this passage is strictly objective. This objective tone enables Boswell to relate the particulars of this incident as a first-person observer without having to provide a coherent interpretation or gloss for Johnson's erratic behavior. Even so, one can identify several instances in which Boswell's word-choice, while ostensibly objective, seems to betray an impulse towards interpretation. For example, he describes Johnson's fit of laughter as being so violent that "he appeared to be almost in a convulsion." I would suggest that Boswell's use of the word "convulsion," while it appears to be simply a metaphoric descriptor for Johnson's erratic behavior, is actually a deliberate allusion by Boswell to the fact that this behavior may indeed be beyond Johnson's control in that it may have a physical cause. However, it is only near the end of the passage that Boswell inserts himself directly into the narration as a subjective participant, stating that, "This most ludicrous exhibition of the aweful, melancholy, and venerable Johnson, happened well to counteract the feelings of sadness which I used to experience when parting with him for a considerable time." This sentence, with which Boswell concludes the anecdote, offers a rare yet highly significant glimpse into his somewhat conflicted feelings about Johnson's disabilities as they effect Johnson's identity as Author. In the Temple-Bar episode "the aweful, melancholy, and venerable Johnson" makes a spectacle of himself by putting on "this most ludicrous exhibition." This head-on collision between Johnson, the Author and Johnson, the Crip, leaves Boswell, the biographer, both amused and bemused.

Ultimately, Boswell circumvents his own dis-ease about Johnson's cripness and its potential to disrupt his carefully-constructed identity as Author by recuperating as many of his physical and psychological idiosyncrasies as possible into an overall schema which presents Johnson as a heroic Supercrip. To this end, he creates and develops a sustained image of a man for whom illness was not an extraordinary occurrence in his life, but rather a characteristic and dominant part of it. This image is reinforced and amplified by dozens of scattered references to Johnson's past poor health. Each reference becomes a cue that creates, evokes, and emphasizes Johnson's entire "compilation of bodily and mental distress" (2:263). The cumulative effect of these references is enhanced by the fact that readers are aware of Johnson's bad health over the time it takes to read Boswell's lengthy book, a period of such duration that Johnson's suffering *seems* perpetual (Newman, 12).

When Johnson's dictionary appeared, the world wondered at a single individual's producing a work usually undertaken by a whole academy. But readers of the *Life* realize the wonder is not that one man produced the work, but that the man who produced it was able to accomplish anything. Rather than wanting to censure Johnson for taking eight years to edit his edition of Shakespeare, we want to applaud the superhuman effort expended to resist the "miserable dejection of spirits" (1:298) that he was labouring under. The pervasive context of poor health and mental distress transforms all Johnson's activities into vivid testimony to his quiet courage (Newman,13). It is in this way that Boswell, as biographer, succeeds in recuperating Johnson's various physical

and psychological idiosyncrasies into an overall construction of Johnson as a suffering Supercrip, whose moral fortitude is made all the stronger in the crucible of physical disability and its accompanying emotional tumult.

The Self-Authored Crip in the Works of Johnson

Like his biographer Boswell, Johnson himself must also struggle to integrate somehow his physical and psychological disabilities into his public persona as Author. Although very little *explicit* evidence of this struggle can be found in Johnson's works, the recurring themes of identity construction and the universal impulse to make meaning found in many of his works can easily be recognized as part of an ongoing endeavour to make meaning out of his fragmented identity. This impulse to construct identity and thereby to make meaning is perhaps most palpable in four of Johnson best-known works, namely, the *Life of Pope*, the *Life of Savage*, the review of Soame Jenyns' *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origins of Evil*, and the *Vanity of Human Wishes*. The order in which I discuss these four works is based on thematic considerations rather than on chronology because I find no kind of linear progression in Johnson's ongoing quest to construct identity. Nevertheless, it is in these four works that we can most clearly see both Johnson, the Author, and Johnson, the Crip, striving to integrate into one cohesive identity.

It is in his *Life of Pope* that Johnson most directly confronts–or is confronted by–the problem of reconciling two conflicting entities: the body with

the mind, the Crip with the Author. Johnson begins the biography with a decidedly sympathetic, perhaps even empathetic, view of Pope's physical frailties:

> Pope was from his birth of a constitution tender and delicate; but is said to have shewn remarkable gentleness and sweetness of disposition. The weakness of his body continued through his life, but the mildness of his mind perhaps ended with his childhood. His voice, when he was young, was so pleasing that he was called in fondness the "little Nightingale." (para. 3)

The sympathy, or perhaps empathy, with which Johnson initially describes Pope's physical disabilities is based on a strong distinction between body and mind. Although young Pope's constitution is "tender and delicate," his disposition is characterized by "remarkable gentleness and sweetness." Likewise, although his body was "weak," his mind was "mild." Significantly, however, Johnson is quick to point out that "The weakness of his body continued through his life, but the mildness of his mind perhaps ended with his childhood." Even at this early stage in his *Life of Pope*, Johnson as a biographer is laying the foundation for his disinterested and critical approach to his subject by opening up the potential for a reversal of the noble mind versus corrupt body dichotomy which forms the basis of conventional constructions of the Supercrip.

It is when Johnson moves from generalities about Pope's 'delicateness' and 'weakness' to actual specifics about the nature of Pope's disabilities and their impact on his daily life that his approach to the problem of Pope's split-identity as Crip-Author is made fully apparent:

> THE person of Pope is well known not to have been formed by the nicest model. He has, in his account of the "Little Club," compared himself to a spider, and by another is described as protuberant behind and before. He is said to have been beautiful in his infancy; but he was of a constitution originally feeble and weak, and as bodies of a tender frame are easily distorted his deformity was probably in part the effect of his application. His stature was so low that, to bring him to a level with common tables, it was necessary to raise his seat. But his face was not displeasing, and his eyes were animated and vivid.
>
> By natural deformity or accidental distortion his vital functions were so much disordered that his life was a "long disease." His most frequent assailant was the headach, which he used to relieve by inhaling the steam of coffee, which he very frequently required.
>
> Most of what can be told concerning his petty peculiarities was communicated by a female domestick of the Earl of Oxford, who knew him perhaps after the middle of life. He was then so weak as to stand in perpetual need of female attendance; extremely sensible of cold, so that he wore a kind of fur doublet under a shirt of very coarse warm linen with fine sleeves. When he rose he was invested in a bodice made of stiff canvass, being scarce able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat. One side was contracted. His legs were so slender that he enlarged their bulk with three pair of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid; for he was not able to dress or undress himself, and neither went to bed nor rose without help. His weakness made it very difficult for him to be clean.
>
> His hair had fallen almost all away, and he used to dine sometimes with Lord Oxford, privately, in a velvet cap. His dress of ceremony was black, with a tye-wig and a little sword.
>
> The indulgence and accommodation which his sickness required had taught him all the unpleasing and unsocial qualities of a valetudinary man. He expected that every thing should give way to his ease or humour, as a child whose parents will not hear her cry has an unresisted dominion in the nursery. (paras. 255-259)

As has previously been noted, Johnson's unflinchingly detailed description of Pope's physical debility and his consequent dependence upon others grates

against the popular image of Pope as the dignified Man of Letters. Johnson's meticulous itemization of the basic personal-care tasks that Pope requires assistance to perform–tasks which include dressing, going to bed, and getting up–serves to highlight his infantlike dependence on others, specifically women. This is indicative of Johnson's refusal, as a biographer, to privilege the Author over the Crip.

Not only does Johnson describe in meticulous detail the specific nature of Pope's deformity in such a way as to make the great Man of Letters the infantlized object of "perpetual need of female attendance," he draws attention to the probability that Pope himself is at least partially culpable in the deformation of his own body. Whereas Boswell seeks to construct Johnson as a heroic Supercrip who courageously perseveres despite his own physical and emotional afflictions and the misconceptions and misjudgements of his contemporaries, Johnson himself, in his *Life of Pope*, seems to have a very different notion of his responsibility as a biographer towards his subject. Rather than making it his project to establish Pope unequivocally as a Supercrip, and thereby open up the possibility of overtly linking himself with Pope as a fellow Supercrip, Johnson puts forward the notion that, not only is Pope's disability, at least in part, the consequence of his own willfulness, as demonstrated by his excessive application to his studies, Pope actually *uses* his own disability as a kind of justification for further willfulness. In essence, therefore, Johnson's philosophy and practices as Pope's biographer are diametrically opposed to those of his own biographer, Boswell.

We can thus trace in Johnson's *Life of Pope* a gradual shift away from an initially sympathetic, and even empathetic, view of Pope's physical frailties and deformities towards a more critical and exacting reading of Pope's deformity and consequent disability. Rather than seeking to portray Pope as a heroic Supercrip who must constantly struggle against the severe limitations of his own–often antagonistic–body, Johnson takes a more analytical and exacting view of Pope's disability, its possible causes, and its perceived impact on his character and actions. This shift may well be indicative of a deliberate decision by Johnson not to identify with Pope as a fellow Supercrip; he chooses instead to view Pope and his deformed, disabled body from the perspective of a disinterested, and thus ostensibly able-bodied, observer. It seems a legitimate probability that this decision may have been, at least in part, prompted by Johnson's dis-ease about his own position as both Author and Crip.

Whereas the principles and practices that Johnson implements in writing his *Life of Pope* might best be described as disinterested, analytical, and even at times, tough-minded, his approach in writing the *Life of Savage* appears to be quite the opposite. While often seeming to remain quite dubious about Pope's ability to maintain absolute emotional and moral integrity despite the external circumstances of his inhabiting a deformed–and thus corrupted–body, Johnson seems much more confident and comfortable in unequivocally asserting the integrity as well as the identity of Richard Savage, despite external circumstances which would seem to call both into question. In her essay, "Fiction

as truth: Personal identity in Johnson's Life of Savage," Toni O'Shaughnessy outlines the antecedent action which serves as the foundation for this biography:

> In 1718, a man calling himself Richard Savage appeared in London professing to be the long-lost, illegitimate son of the late Richard Savage , Earl Rivers, and Mrs. Anne Brett, formerly the notorious Countess of Macclesfield. The claim was a sensational one, and resurrected a twenty-year-old scandal that had resulted in the first Parliamentary divorce in 1698. If this Richard Savage was who he claimed to be, he was entitled to recognition by prominent relatives on both sides and to funds to support himself in the style to which he insisted he ought to have been accustomed. Anne Brett hotly disputed his claims, however. Throughout her life, she consistently maintained that both of the children she had borne the Earl Rivers had died in infancy, and Savage was never able to substantiate his allegations. Despite wide public interest in the case and considerable sympathy for Savage, most contemporaries found his story, as Boswell would later put it, "at least somewhat doubtful" (1:170). Yet in his famous biography published in the year of Savage's death (1744), Samuel Johnson proceeds as if there were no question about the truth of his subject's claims to identity. The biography heralds itself as the life of "Mr Richard Savage;. Son of the Earl Rivers," and never once capitulates so far as to consider that Savage may well have been the imposter many contemporaries took him for. (O'Shaughnessy, 487)

The central theme in Johnson's *Life of Savage* is the problem of identity. As O'Shaughnessy points out, "The issue that Johnson must deal with is not merely that Richard Savage's identity is contested; the more fundamental problem is that in Savage's case, personal identity is shown to be radically and permanently contestable. In the course of the narrative, Savage's definition of himself must compete with definitions imposed upon him by a multitude of persons, from the nurse who raised him as her own son to leading social and political figures; Johnson himself presents a particular Savage to his readers,

who recreate Savage (and Johnson) yet again for themselves" (O'Shaughnessy, 489).

Savage's identity itself thus becomes a contested entity, undergoing constant redefinition and reappropriation:

> But whatever were her motives, no sooner was her son born than she discovered a resolution of disowning him; and in a very short time removed him from her sight by committing him to the care of a poor woman, whom she directed to educate him as her own, and injoined never to inform him of his true parents. (para. 7)
>
> About this time his nurse, who had always treated him as her own son, died, and it was natural for him to take care of those effects, which by her death were, as he imagined, become his own... (para. 20)
>
> Sir Richard Steele, having declared in his favour with all the ardour of benevolence which constituted his character, promoted his interest with the utmost zeal, related his misfortunes, applauded his merit, took all opportunities of recommending him, and asserted that 'the inhumanity of his mother had given him a right to find every good man his father'. (para. 29)

Thus, in the *Life of Savage*, we see Johnson enacting his generation's most urgent and unsettling questions about the problem of personal identity, despite--and even by means of--the text's apparently untroubled and credulous surface (O'Shaughnessy, 489). The fact that Johnson chooses to affirm so unequivocally an identity that is so readily disputable becomes particularly interesting when we consider it in light of the rather schizophrenic--and thus also tenuous and contestable--nature of Johnson's identity as Crip-Author. It seems to me that, by choosing to represent Savage's self-claimed identity as *fact*, while at the same time ultimately acknowledging that this *fact* is readily disputable and

potentially erroneous–Johnson is advocating to his readers a person's right to construct and reconstruct his/her own identity, even if it involves blurring the line between perceived and accepted fact and fiction. As O'Shaughnessy notes:

> Those who try to create just representation in political fact' are 'proposing Laws, which, however just or expedient, will never be made' ... 'The Poet,' Johnson claims, 'is employed in a more pleasing Undertaking' ... Rather than searching for truth and accuracy in the representational structures of political reality, he creates through words a fictional utopia, 'guides the unhappy Fugitive from Want and Persecution, to Plenty, Quiet, and Security, and seats him in Scenes of peaceful Solitude, and undisturbed Repose' (p. 93). In the process of creating a fiction that functions as real life ought to, the poet blurs the distinction between reality and fiction and clears a new space for the relief of suffering." (O'Shaughnessy, 496)

Thus, through his identity as Author, Johnson is able to clear a new space in which the self-constructed identity can be affirmed and even celebrated in much the same way as he is able to make his writing a space in which the corporeal realities of his identity as Crip can coexist–albeit in constant tension–with his identity as Author.

The same recurrent themes of identity construction, perceived versus actual reality, and the *'problem'* of human suffering that figure so prominently in many of Johnson's biographies are also, implicitly or explicitly, at the center of many of his more overtly philosophical and didactic works. While these themes can be traced through most–if not all–of Johnson's non-biographical writing, it is in his review of Soame Jenyns' *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origins of Evil* (1757) that Johnson most directly engages the *'problem'* of human suffering and its

relationship to perceived versus actual reality as well as its implications for individual identity construction.

Johnson clearly outlines his main argument in the first paragraph of his essay:

> This is a treatise, consisting of six letters, upon a very difficult and important question, which, I am afraid, this author's endeavours will not free from the perplexity which has entangled the speculatists of all ages, and which must always continue while *we see* but *in part*. He calls it a *Free Enquiry*, and, indeed, his *freedom* is, I think, greater than his modesty. Though he is far from the contemptible arrogance, or the impious licentiousness of Bolingbroke, yet he decides, too easily, upon questions out of the reach of human determination, with too little consideration of mortal weakness, and with too much vivacity for the necessary caution. (para. 1)

Essentially, Johnson is here accusing Jenyns of vanity in its most daring and dangerous form. As Robert J. Mayhew explains:

> Johnson's views were made clear in his review of *Soame Jenyns's Free Enquiry* (1757). His main point with regard to cosmological speculation is made in the first paragraph: "we see but in part," and, as such, the structure of the universe lies "out of the reach of human determination." Jenyns's argument, that pain in one part of the universe cannot be eliminated without causing greater pain elsewhere is then nonsense, in that we do not have the faculties with which to judge such a statement. To come up with such notions is, therefore, in Lockean terms, "to impose words for ideas." ... Johnson is not seeking to deny a cosmic hierarchy, merely that we can understand any part of it beyond that available to empirical examination. Toward the end of the review, Johnson's position on religion is made clear: "its evidences and sanctions are not irresistible, because it was intended to induce, not to compel, and . . . it is obscure, because we want faculties to comprehend it." (Mayhew, 552)

For Johnson, the ultimate human sin is pride, and the ultimate pride is to seek to explain that which we do not possess the capacity to understand. This is precisely the sin that Jenyns commits, in Johnson's eyes, when he undertakes to *explain* the *problem* of human suffering:

> The second letter, on the evils of imperfection, is little more than a paraphrase of Pope's epistles, or, yet less than a paraphrase, a mere translation of poetry into prose. This is, surely, to attack difficulty with very disproportionate abilities, to cut the Gordian knot with very blunt instruments. When we are told of the insufficiency of former solutions, why is one of the latest, which no man can have forgotten, given us again? I am told, that this pamphlet is not the effort of hunger; what can it be, then, but the product of vanity? and yet, how can vanity be gratified by plagiarism or transcription? When this speculatist finds himself prompted to another performance, let him consider, whether he is about to disburden his mind, or employ his fingers; and, if I might venture to offer him a subject, I should wish, that he would solve this question: Why he, that has nothing to write, should desire to be a writer? (para. 6)

Jenyns' offences, according to Johnson, are twofold. Not only does he exhibit great vanity by seeking to explain the *problem* of human suffering, and in doing so, venturing beyond the divinely-prescribed limits of human understanding; he also attempts to do this by appropriating ideas that had already been expressed–much more effectively–by Pope. Given that the subject of Jenyns' treatise is human suffering, and temporarily laying aside his specific objections to Jenyns' attempt to use the theory of the Great Chain of Being in order to prove that the existence of suffering in the world is necessary for the existence of happiness, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that Johnson would have viewed Pope as being infinitely more qualified to write about this subject, not only

because of his superiority to Jenyns as an author, but also because of his status as a crip.

Of course, if Pope's status as crip makes him infinitely more qualified than Jenyns to write on the subject of human suffering, the same may be said for Johnson. This is perhaps why Johnson's criticism of Jenyns is at its most intense–and, arguably, most effective–when he outlines and refutes Jenyns' arguments for both the necessity and benefits of sickness. According to Jenyns, sickness is indeed both a necessary and a beneficial evil:

> The sufferings of the sick are greatly relieved by many trifling gratifications, imperceptible to others, and, sometimes, almost repaid by the inconceivable transports occasioned by the return of health and vigour. (para. 22)

Johnson, on the other hand, undercuts these ostensible esoteric benefits of sickness with the voice of both personal and universal human experience:

> That want of taste for one enjoyment is supplied by the pleasures of some other, may be fairly allowed; but the compensations of sickness I have never found near to equivalence, and the transports of recovery only prove the intenseness of the pain. (para. 25)

By thus exposing the presumptuousness and vanity of Jenyns' argument in general, and his exegesis on the benefits of sickness in particular, Johnson successfully demonstrates that the *problem* of human suffering must remain unsolvable to the finite human mind. In this way, he is also able to assert the ultimate unresolvability of the *problem* of his own split identity as Crip-Author while, at the same time, affirming the potential for moral and spiritual growth that is inherent in the human compulsion to struggle with these kinds of unsolvable

problems. For Johnson, to struggle with unsolvable problems related to the condition of fallen, finite humanity is virtuous, but to in any way attempt to solve these problems through the imposition of manufactured explanations and solutions, as Jenyns does, is vanity.

Indeed, it is vanity rather than disease or disability that Johnson considers to be the greatest evil facing humanity. Interestingly, however, as a Crip-Author, he does, on numerous occasions, explore probable causal and cognate connections between disease/disability and the destructive force of human vanity. While these kinds of connections between disease/disability and human vanity can be traced through a number of his works, it is in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* that Johnson most directly, and most effectively, delineates these connections. More specifically, Johnson metaphorically uses a series of images of physical disease throughout the poem in order to illustrate the insidiously corrupting and ultimately destructive influence of human vanity–both in the sense of 'conceit' as well as in the sense of 'emptiness.'

In his general examination of how man's corrupt and conceited nature causes him to lose the ability to "wish wisely" (and thus become *dis-abled*), Johnson discusses the common human desire for material wealth and a high social position. He first turns his attention to man's reckless pursuit of material wealth:

> But scarce observ'd the Knowing and the Bold
> Fall in the gen'ral Massacre of Gold;
> Wide-wasting Pest! that rages unconfin'd,
> And crowds with crimes the Records of Mankind,
> For Gold his Sword the Hireling Ruffian draws,

> For Gold the Hireling Judge distorts the Laws;
> Wealth heap'd on Wealth, nor Truth nor Safety buys,
> The Dangers gather as the Treasures rise.
> (ll. 21-28)

Significantly, the language that Johnson uses in this verse-paragraph to describe the obsessive human desire for wealth is the language of disease and death. Johnson portrays the seemingly inherent human tendency towards materialistic greed in terms, not only of disease, but of epidemic, referring to it as a "Wide-wasting Pest! that rages unconfin'd, / And crowds with crimes the Records of Mankind." The obsessive desire for wealth is both "wide" in terms of its capacity to infect the entire human race, and also "wasting" in that it eats away at a person's moral fibre, like a cancer that "rages unconfin'd." All those who become infected by this "Pest" are similarly and seriously corrupted, as "For Gold his Sword the Hireling Ruffian draws, / For Gold the Hireling Judge distorts the Laws." More insipid and lethal than any physical disease, the obsessive desire for wealth, as Johnson presents it in these lines, has the potential to enslave and corrupt all of humanity through its own vanity. Thus, all of humanity becomes, like Pope, culpable for its own state of both disease and dis-ease.

Not only does Johnson metonymically present disease as an illustration of human vanity, he also delineates the process by which disease becomes the ultimate end-product of human vanity:

> With Age, with Cares, with Maladies oppress'd,
> He seeks the Refuge of Monastic Rest.
> Grief aids Disease, remember'd Folly stings,
> And his last Sighs reproach the Faith of Kings.
> (ll. 117-120)

In these lines, Johnson describes the last days of Thomas Wolsey (1475-1530), who was notorious for his political ambition. It is in these closing days of his life that Wolsey's past vanity of ambition–his "remember'd Folly"–comes back to haunt him, and actually hasten his death. The "Maladies," "Cares," and finally "Disease" that accompany age are exacerbated by "Grief" over the "remember'd Folly" into which his ambitions had led him. His regret is so profound that "his last Sighs reproach the Faith of Kings." The psychological disease of ambition with which Wolsey is initially infected ultimately evolves into the Grief which, in conjunction with ensuing physical disease, ends his life. Wolsey thus becomes a metonymic representation of the destructive power that the disease of ambition has over all those who become infected by it.

The symbolic association of physical disease with human vanity and the resulting moral corruption and decay that Johnson carefully develops throughout undergoes a significant modulation near the end of the poem. Here, disease is transformed from being the mark and consequence of corruption to being the ultimate vehicle for release and redemption:

> New Sorrow rises as the Day returns,
> A Sister sickens, or a Daughter mourns.
> Now Kindred Merit fills the sable Bier,
> Now lacerated Friendship claims a Tear.
> Year chases Year, Decay pursues Decay,
> Still drops some Joy from with'ring Life away;
> New Forms arise, and diff'rent Views engage,
> Superfluous lags the Vet'ran on the Stage,
> Till pitying Nature signs the last Release,
> And bids afflicted Worth retire to Peace. (ll. 301-310)

While Johnson does not suddenly seek to nullify the negative impact that disease has on humanity, he does, in these lines, shift his focus to the *natural* function of disease in bringing an oft-sought-for end to the ever-increasing miseries of human existence. As Helen Deutsch points out, Johnson's objective in these lines is to redeem both disease and death out of their conventional constructions as punishments and reconstruct them as agents of emancipation:

> Johnson rewrites even the humble life that replaces ambitious solipsism with what he would similarly praise in his *Elegy to Robert Levet* as the "narrow round" of social virtue, the submission to an inhumanly regular process of inevitable loss that makes its end–Nature's signing of a "last Release" from life refigured as debt–like the end of the poem itself, a devoutly-to-be-wished escape from selfhood ... Johnson transforms Pope's heroic refusal to stand still into a universal desire for an end to life's infinite gradations of loss. Both Pope's original appropriation of imitation's stage with deformity's trademark, and Johnson's impersonal subjection of individuality on that same stage to a divine author's ends, form particular couplets of mind and body, of the disembodied power of art with the embodied particulars of spectacle and show. Both authors are monstrous characters and national monuments in the eighteenth-century theater of authorship. (Deutsch, 185)

It seems to me that Johnson's chief aim in thus reconfiguring the horrific specters of disease and death from agents of oppression and punishment into agents of emancipation and release is to affect, as Deutsch terms it, "a devoutly-to-be-wished escape from selfhood." In other words, by thus refiguring disease and death as liberators rather than oppressors, Johnson is able to open up a space in which it becomes possible to refigure his own physical and psychological disabilities as the locus of struggle, and ultimately of spiritual growth. The conclusion of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* thus becomes a vehicle through

which Johnson is able to reinscribe the signs of disease and disability as signifiers of perseverance and moral fortitude rather than simply of moral and spiritual corruption. Therefore, by extension, the poem's last images of disease and death can indeed be seen as agents of liberation which free humanity–and with it, Johnson himself–from the oppression of the physical and psychological limitations of the self and open up a new space where the integrity of mind and spirit can be achieved and maintained apart from the corrupting weakness of the body.

Conclusion

Although Johnson's disabilities remain largely unwritten–or at least underwritten–in Boswell's biography as well as in his own works, those instances in which Boswell and Johnson do make textual or subtextual allusions to his disabilities yield some very interesting and important insights into the corporeal and psychological realities of Johnson's disabilities and their impact on his identity and practices as an Author. Because Johnson's disabilities are not exclusively physical, but rather a virtually undistinguishable melange of physical tics and emotional antics, they cannot easily be incorporated into his public persona as Author. Consequently, these disabilities threaten to destabilize his identity as Author in that they either render his body unreadable or cause him to be misread by the uninitiated as an "inspired ideot." This means that both Boswell, as a biographer, and Johnson himself must seek to find ways of

ascribing meaning to Johnson's seemingly nonsensical tics and antics. Boswell does this in his *Life of Johnson* by consistently constructing Johnson as a heroic Supercrip who is engaged in a constant battle, first of all against the foibles and frailties of his own body, and also against the misinterpretations and misjudgements of a misunderstanding public. However, when Johnson's antics become too bizarre for Boswell to incorporate them into his construction of Johnson as a heroic Supercrip, he opts either to narrate those incidents as mere happenings, offering little or nothing in the way of editorial comment, or less frequently, chooses to trivialize them. Johnson, on the other hand, endeavours to make meaning out of his own fragmented identity by making both his biographical and philosophical works venues for the construction and reconstruction of identities. The Author who so eloquently explores themes of identity construction, perceived versus actual reality, and the *'problem'* of human suffering in the *Life of Pope*, the *Life of Savage*, the *Review of Soame Jenyns,* and the *Vanity of Human Wishes* is also the Crip who must struggle to make meaning out of his own inarticulable corporeal tics and psychological antics. Johnson's Crip-ness thus remains a locus of dis-ease for both biographer and author.

Chapter Four
Mary Leapor: Writing Into and Out Of the Eighteenth-Century 'Problem' of Body vs. Mind

Introduction

To place the full-time kitchen-maid and part-time writer, Mary Leapor, alongside the literary icons, Pope and Johnson, in a survey of eighteenth-century literary portrayals of illness and disability may initially seem, at best, egalitarian to the extreme, or, at worst, utterly illogical. In addition to being of considerably lesser social and literary status than Pope and Johnson, she cannot be said to have had a readily-identifiable chronic illness or disability (though she died of measles at the age of 24). Nevertheless, Leapor has become in recent years among the most frequently anthologized women writers of the eighteenth century. Furthermore, while it is true that Leapor cannot be said to have a readily-identifiable chronic illness or disability, it is equally true that illness, disease, and debility are prominent and recurrent concerns in both her life and her work.

Although it is indeed difficult to identify any one specific disease or illness from which Leapor suffered, there is ample biographical evidence to indicate that Leapor had a fundamentally frail constitution and as a result was constantly preoccupied with thoughts of illness and impending death. The biographical note on Leapor that Roger Lonsdale provides in *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* tells us that:

> Her employer ... described her as having been "extremely swarthy, and quite emaciated, with a long crane-neck, and a short body, much resembling, in shape, a bass-viol." ... A letter [from Mary Leapor to Bridget Freemantle] reveals her sense of precariousness: if her father were to die, she would be "left naked and defenceless, without Friend, and without Dependence; with a weak and indolent Body to provide for its own Subsistence; and a restless Mind, rack'd with unprofitable invention." (Lonsdale, 194)

The corporeal realities of living with "a weak and indolent Body" have a strong and direct impact on Leapor's poetry. In his seminal study of Leapor and her works, Richard Greene argues that:

> Her frequent illnesses caused Leapor to doubt her own maturity, and even her moral and spiritual stature ... [Her] sense that she did not have long to live is an important factor in the struggle for 'content' which is so prominent in her poems. (Greene, 198)

In light of such evidence demonstrating the significance of her physical frailty and its impact on her poetry, the proposition of placing Mary Leapor alongside Pope and Johnson in a survey of eighteenth-century literary portrayals of illness and disability becomes an entirely legitimate and productive undertaking. As I will seek to demonstrate in this chapter, Leapor's approach to illness, specifically in relation to the body/mind dichotomy as it was commonly conceptualized in eighteenth-century society, make her poems in many interesting and important ways encapsulations of eighteenth-century views of the interrelationship between mind, body, and identity.

The past fifteen years have seen a renewed interest among eighteenth-century literary scholars and critics in seeking out lesser-known writers whose

works represent the experience of members of minority groups, groups such as women, "the poor," or "the disabled." Leapor and her works have consequently become the focus of considerable critical attention in recent years. Caryn Chaden offers the following summary of recent critical treatments of Leapor's works, specifically in relation to her iconic mentor, Alexander Pope:

> Donna Landry offers the most radical reading; although she acknowledges that "Leapor's most obvious poetical debt is to Pope, she emphasizes the ways in which Leapor subverts Pope's patriarchal stances towards class and gender. Landry concludes that of the poetry produced by laboring-class writers in the first half of the eighteenth century, Leapor's is "the body of work most easily assimilable to what we commonly describe today as 'radical feminism,' with its polemics against patriarchy, male violence, and heterosexist containments of economies of desire."[9] In contrast, both Betty Rizzo and Richard Greene agree that Leapor takes strong positions against social injustices–especially those concerning gender and class–but see her as fundamentally conservative, accepting the traditions that she learned, in large part, from Pope. Greene writes that "Leapor's attitude toward Pope very much reflects her tendency to respect the intellectual, social, and religious traditions of her society while arguing bravely against specific practices which she believes are oppressive. Leapor's passionate admiration of Pope's work is matched by a robust independence of mind." (Greene, 182) Rizzo goes even further, arguing that Leapor, like other "primitive poets" of the day, "had to catch up, make up for lost time, follow Pope and learn to write like him. She was overwhelmed with an anxiety, not the anxiety of influence but the anxiety *for* influence." (Rizzo, 332) (Chaden, 31-32)

Building on this overview of recent scholarship on Leapor, Chaden goes on to argue that:

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[9]Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women Poets in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 119.

> what [Leapor] gained from reading [Pope's] *Essay on Criticism*, *Essay on Man*, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, *The Dunciad*, and even *Of the Characters of Women* was not just a model for writing poetry, but a model for viewing herself as a poet. This model, with its emphasis on social commentary and the critical perspective of an outside observer, shapes both the form and content of Leapor's poetry. (Chaden, 32)

While I think that Chaden argues this thesis from entirely solid critical ground, it does seem to me that, in focussing exclusively on the formal social and critical connections between the poetry of Pope and Leapor, Chaden overlooks another very interesting and important point of connection between these two ostensibly mismatched poets, namely, a very self-conscious awareness in their work of the corporeal realities which inform their work. I would contend that what Leapor gained from reading Pope was, in fact, not simply a model for writing poetry and a model for viewing herself as a poet, but also a model for incorporating her own struggle to reconcile the limitations of the body with the aspirations of the mind. Like Pope, Leapor found herself writing out of physical and social circumstances which mitigated against her achieving any level of recognition or success as an Author. In Pope, therefore, Leapor ultimately finds a model for writing into and out of her position as Other.

To undertake this kind of examination of Leapor's poems as the products of a self-consciously Othered Author is an endeavour that is, by its very nature, contentious. As Laura Mandell has argued, an exploration of Leapor's corporeal and psychological links to Pope as a self-consciously Othered author risks recreating, and thus re-entrenching, the process through which Leapor, like

Pope, becomes marked out as an Other (Mandell, 553, 557). This argument is not entirely without merit insofar as to undertake such an exploration without at all times maintaining an acute recognition and awareness of Leapor's own rhetorical methods of, and authorial purposes for, aligning herself with Pope as an Othered author would indeed be to run the risk of promoting a renewed marginalization of both Leapor and Pope. However, I would contend that, where such recognition and awareness of authorial method and purpose are present, this kind of examination of authorial Othering by Leapor, and also by Pope as the mentor who models Otherness for her, becomes emancipatory rather than oppressive.

It is in accordance with the model provided to her by Pope and his works that Leapor seeks to demonstrate not only her formal skills as a poet, but also her capacity to employ artfully the classical poetic style that was characteristic of Pope's poetry in order to engage the dominant eighteenth-century binary constructions of body versus mind, and individual fulfilment versus social and spiritual responsibility. Like Pope, Leapor engages these dominant cultural binary constructions from the perspective of one whose physical and social realties mark her out as an Other in the society that she is seeking to engage with and influence through her poetry. More specifically, we can see in poems such as "Celadon to Mira," "An Epistle to Artemisia. On Fame," "The Headach'," "Mira's Will," "An Epistle to a Lady" and "On Sickness," Leapor, in a manner that is strikingly similar to Pope, repeatedly and consistently illustrating and interrogating the body/mind dichotomy as it was commonly conceptualized in

eighteenth-century society in order to assert her unique legitimacy and authority as an Othered Author.

'In Doubt Whether Mind or Body to Prefer': Leapor, Pope's True Heir

It is in "Celadon to Mira" that Leapor most directly invokes a connection to her literary mentor, Pope. Significantly, Leapor explicitly constructs this connection as one that is based on a mutual personal concern with the *problem* of the body/mind dichotomy as it is conceptualized in eighteenth-century society. At the heart of this poem is Leapor's very Popean preoccupation with the often antagonistic relationship between body and mind. Early in the poem, Celadon warns Mira against allowing her mind to gain too much of an upper hand in this ongoing struggle:

> By thy chang'd Features I too often find
> The wild Ideas of thy restless Mind;
> All serious now abstracted from the Crew,
> No prudent Stoic more serene than you,
> Till in your Brain some gaudy Pictures spring
> All gay and careless, then you laugh and sing:
> These vanish like a painted Cloud — and now
> Pale Discontent o'er shades thy mournful Brow:
> You form dark Visions and at Phantoms start,
> These Woes proceed from an ill-govern'd Heart,
> From a too thoughtless or too roving Mind;
> For these are Strangers to a Soul resign'd.
> (ML, *PUSO*, i. 137)

Celadon's warning to Mira about the dangers inherent in allowing the mind to totally control one's being stands in diametric opposition to the conventional

eighteenth-century topology in which the mind is figured as intrinsically nobler than, and thus superior to, the body. Celadon observes that Mira's tendency to give free reign to the "wild ideas" of her "reckless Mind" actually causes her body to function in erratic extremes, which are ultimately quite unhealthy. Mira is constantly driven from one emotional and physical extreme to the other: one moment she is more serene than the most prudent stoic, the next moment she is giving way to fits of uncontrolled laughter. In Celadon's view, such woeful extremes are consequences of an "ill-govern'd Heart" and a "too thoughtless or too roving Mind." Later in the poem, the shade of Pope also warns Mira about the dangers inherent in the conflict between body and mind:

> Say, why thy Features lose their healthful Dye,
> And the Tears tremble in the languid Eye?
> The mighty Conflict I with pity see,
> When thy rude Passions struggle to be free,
> And rack thy Breast–the incoherent Stage,
> Where grave and comick jar like Youth and Age;
> Now Death appears all horrible and grim:
> But the next Moment none so fair as him,
> And now you sigh—Ah, let me calmly die:
> Then shrinking, trembling from the Grave you fly.
> Such jarring Tumults in your Bosom roll;
> (Ah, what so various as a Woman's Soul!)
> But thou, beware, and if thy Fate has join'd
> A sickly Body to a roving Mind;
> Be calm nor mourn at the Supreme Decree,
> Nor think the Mandate shall be chang'd for thee,
> But meet with Patience what thou canst not flee.
> (ML, *PUSO*, i. 138-9)

Chaden offers the following analysis of these lines and the insights that they provide into Leapor's characteristic ambivalence in her attitude toward illness and

death as the ultimate signifiers of the problematic dichotomy of Mind versus Body:

> That Leapor should speak of a "Mighty Conflict" suggests that for some time she anticipated death and attempted to adopt a patient and resigned attitude. Of particular interest are the lines: "But thou, beware, and if thy Fate has join'd / A sickly Body to a roving Mind...". Given that in her time it was usual to see mind and body in a closer unity than we do now, Leapor finds a deep inadequacy in her own response to illness. Indeed, the unsettled mind is linked to the unhealthy body as though both were dimensions of a more general failure in her life. Her attitudes here are linked to the assumption underlying physiognomy, that the body reflects mental and moral worth. (Chaden, 196)

Chaden argues here that, by appropriating Pope's voice, Leapor is able to articulate a societal as well as a personal dis-ease surrounding the body/mind dichotomy as it was commonly conceptualized in eighteenth-century society, particularly in relation to notions of illness and death. More specifically, Chaden points out that Leapor's vicariously-expressed anxiety about the mismatching of her "sickly Body" with her "roving Mind" is very much a product of the popular eighteenth-century understanding and practice of physiognomy, the very science that Pope's detractors used to support their construction of Pope as Monster. Leapor's links to Pope as her mentor thus become corporeal and psychological as well as literary. Leapor finds herself caught in what Pope himself described in *An Essay on Man* as a fundamental human dilemma of being "In doubt ... [her] Mind or Body to prefer" (Pope, *Essay on Man*, II, line 8). Although these corporeal and psychological links between Leapor and Pope remain largely unexamined by Chaden, who chooses instead to focus on the stylistic and

linguistic links between these two poets, it seems to me that it is precisely these unexplored corporeal and psychological links between kitchen-maid and literary mentor that are likely to yield the deepest and most significant insights into the ways in which Leapor engages the *problem* of the body/mind dichotomy in her poems.

The corporeal and psychological links between herself and her mentor, Pope, that Leapor introduces in "Celadon to Mira" are drawn even more explicitly in "An Epistle to Artemisia. On Fame," a poem which functions on many levels as a direct parallel to Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. As Chaden observes, by the time Leapor wrote this poem, she had already gathered subscribers for the first volume of her poetry and had thus achieved a certain measure of fame in her village–the consequences of which it appears she found to be primarily negative (Chaden, 35). Leapor addresses this poem to her friend and patron, Bridget Freemantle, who appears as the persona of Artemisia and serves as the trusted friend and advisor to the beleaguered Author in much the same way as does Arbuthnot in Pope's poem. Like Pope in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Leapor bemoans her recently-achieved status as a celebrity, asking Artemisia, "do the Slaves of Fame / Deserve our Pity, or our Blame?" (*PUSO* 2:1-2). Unlike Pope's Arbuthnot, however, Artemisia remains silent; this leaves Mira, Leapor's persona, to establish her identity as a poet by defining herself against other characters in the poem. These other characters function as antiselves for Mira in this poem in much the same way as the figures of Atticus and Sporus function as antiselves for Pope in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

In a manner that is again reminiscent of Pope in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Leapor's Mira finds that most of the "Patrons of [her] early song" (2:69) are not really interested in her poetry; rather, their real interest is in her potential ability as an emerging celebrity to grant favours. As Chaden rightly points out, Leapor is hardly in a position to grant favours on the grand scale that Pope was; however, she could provide her neighbourhood visitors with the almost-universally-sought-for opportunity to be connected with someone famous (Chaden, 36). Of course, the facts of Mira's humble circumstances makes the ambitious attentions of her admirers all the more ridiculous. The character of Cressida in this poem thus becomes a self-absorbed small-town Sporus:

> A decent Virgin, blest with idle Time,
> Now gingles Bobbins, and now ponders Rhime:
> Not ponders–reads–Not reads–but looks 'em o'er
> To little purpose, like a thousand more.
> (*ML, PUSO* 2:87-90)

It does not take long for Cressida's self-absorption to become apparent: "I've read the like, tho' I forget the Place: / But, Mrs. Mira, How-d'ye like my lace?" (2:103-104). Cressida's 'blessing' of "idle Time" becomes a curse for Mira, whose circumstances make spare time a precious commodity which could surely be spent in pursuits more meaningful than listening to Cressida's idle prattle. As the poem goes on there is, in fact, an increasingly palpable sense of Mira's frustration–frustration that is most probably mixed with envy–over the wasteful disregard of the blessing of physical strength coupled with leisure time that is exhibited by so many of her would-be patrons who are of the upper class:

> Yet some Impertinence pursues me still;
> And so I fear it ever must, and will.
> So soft *Pappilia* o'er the Table bends
> With her small Circle of insipid Friends;
> Who wink, and stretch, and rub their drowsy Eyes,
> While o'er their Heads Imperial Dulness flies.
> "What can we do? We cannot stir for Show'rs:
> "Or what invent, to kill the irksome Hours?
>
> "Why, run to *Leapor's*, fetch that idle Play:
> "'Twill serve to laugh at all the livelong Day."
>
> Preferment great! To beat one's weary Brains,
> To find Diversion only when it rains! (*ML, PUSO* 2:167-78)

The idleness and–to use the broadest sense of the word–*dullness* of these would-be patrons must have indeed been irksome to a woman Author forced to contend with the kind of physical and social restrictions under which Leapor laboured. Donna Landry observes that:

> The dunce-like dullness of the idle female gentry offends Leapor as much as Artemisia's cultivation pleases her. Such torpid inactivity of mind in a body rendered idle by the weather is crucially linked to the desire for cruel amusement at the socially humbler, and more industrious, Mira's expense. (Landry, 96)

The point that Landry makes here is an interesting and important one in terms of understanding the way in which Leapor conceptualizes and presents the *problem* of the body/mind dichotomy in her poetry. In Leapor's schema, dull and idle minds produce sluggish and inert bodies. The disdain with which these genteel women regard both Leapor and her writing thus becomes evidence of their intellectual dullness, a dullness which is first betrayed by their physical inertia.

As Cressida's visit drags on and on, Mira starts to sound more and more like Pope in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, calling for his door to be barred against the onslaught of would-bes:

> Afflicted Mira, with a languid Eye,
> Now views the Clock, and now the Western Sky.
> "The Sun grows lower. Will you please to walk?
> "No, read some more."
> "But I had rather talk."
> "Perhaps you're tired."
> "Truly that may be."
> "Or think me weak."
> "Why, Cressy, Thoughts are free."
> At last we part, with Congees at the Door:
> "I'd thank you, Mira, but my thanks are poor.
> "I wish, alas! But wishes are in vain.
> "I like your Garden; and I'll come again.
> "Dear, how I wish!–I do, or let me die,
> "That we liv'd near"
> –Thinks Mira, "So don't I."
> (*ML, PUSO* 2:106-116)

What Leapor achieves in this verse-paragraph is distinctly Popean satire with a uniquely domestic flavour. As Chaden notes:

> Mira is indeed "tired" of Cressy's company; but as she demonstrates her skill in shaping dialogue out of whip-cracking heroic couplets, her comments glide right by her visitor's weak mind. Hence Leapor, like Pope, fuses form and content to affirm her own superiority as the afflicted poet. (Chaden, 36)

The notion of the "afflicted poet" provides another significant parallel between Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and Leapor's "An Epistle to Artemisia. On Fame." As Pope does in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Leapor makes her "Epistle to Artemisia" a forum in which to reaffirm her commitment to her craft and to

document the sacrifices that she has made in its service. Among the most emotionally difficult of these sacrifices that she must endure are her dismissal from work and the lectures that she consequently receives at home:

> *Parthenia* cries, "Why, Mira, you are dull,
> "And ever musing, till you crack your Skull;
> "Still poking o'er your What-d'ye-call–your Muse:
> "But pr'ythee, Mira, when dost clean thy Shoes?"
>
> Then comes *Sophronia*, like a barb'rous Turk:
> "You thoughtless Baggage, when d'ye mind your work?
> "Still o'er a Table leans your bending Neck:
> "Your Head will grow prepost'rous, like a Peck.
> "Go ply your Needle: You might earn your Bread;
> "Or who must feed you when your Father's dead?"
> She sobbing answers, "Sure I need not come
> "To you for Lectures; I have store at Home.
> "What can I do?"
> "—Not scribble."
> "—But I will."
> "Then get thee packing—and be aukward still."
> (*ML, PUSO* 2:149-63)

These lines highlight important similarities as well as important differences between Pope and Leapor in relation to their vocation as Authors, and specifically in relation to the sufferings that they must undergo because of their vocation. Notwithstanding the fact that Pope's deformity as well as his Catholicism cause him to be marked out as Other within certain segments of his society, Pope nevertheless received recognition from writers he respected, and was able to make money selling his work. On the other hand, in this poem Leapor documents the sheer determination required of a working-class woman, no matter how talented she may be, to enable her to pursue her craft and to function as an Author. In relation to this point, Chaden notes that, "while Pope

ends his poem confident in his position, Leapor still has doubts: "'Methinks I feel this coward in my Bosom glow: / Say, *Artemisia*, shall I speak, or no?'" (*ML, PUSO* 2:179-80), (Chaden, 37). Thus, at the end of the poem Leapor does not emerge as a triumphant author in the way that Pope does at the end of *Arbuthnot*; rather, she remains an afflicted poet whose physical and social disadvantages continue to make her literary endeavours a constant, if noble, struggle.

In "The Headach'", Leapor puts a decidedly comic, perhaps even ironic, spin on her own self-construction as an afflicted poet. At the center of this poem is Leapor's comic comparison of her compulsion to write poetry with a friend's compulsion to gossip. Both are crimes which carry natural consequences:

> Just so, Aurelia, you complain
> Of Vapours, Rheums, and gouty Pain;
> Yet I am patient, so shou'd you,
> For Cramps and Head-Ach's are our due:
> We suffer justly for our Crimes;
> For Scandal you, and I for Rhymes... (*ML, PUSO* 1:102)

The notion that the physical suffering that Mira and Aurelia must endure is the natural, and thus inevitable, consequence of their respective intellectual and emotional crimes is deeply rooted in the conventional eighteenth-century understanding of the interconnectedness of Mind and Body. As Richard Greene notes:

> Whereas in the twentieth century sickness is often regarded in objective or even mechanical terms, previous centuries tended to see mind and body in closer unity. Roy Porter writes: "For the early modern mind, the condition of the body, registering the ups and downs of health and

> sickness, meshed with wider ideas of identity and destiny, of social, moral, and spiritual well-being."[10] Sickness was not usually conceived of in purely material terms, but was seen in close relation to other crucial human experiences. Sickness was often thought an intervention of the divine will, especially as punishment for sin. (Greene, 187)

Hence, as much as Aurelia's "Vapours, Rheums, and gouty Pain" are the just physical punishments for her moral transgression of indulging in idle gossip, Mira's "Head-Ach's" are the corporeal consequences of her willful insistence in continuing to write poetry despite restrictions of class and gender which work to negate her identity as an Author. If, according to Johnson, Pope's deformity was, at least in part, the consequence of his own willfulness, as demonstrated by his excessive application to his studies, then it would also be entirely logical, according to the tenets of eighteenth-century humoral theory, for Mira's headaches to be the direct result of her own stubborn insistence on pursuing her literary aspirations in defiance of established social and cultural norms.

Writing Disease and Death as Illustration and Resolution of the Body/Mind 'Problem'

For Leapor, the ultimate affliction that she is faced with as an Author remains the ever-present conflict between body and mind. Repeatedly throughout her work, as we see in poems such as "Celadon to Mira," "An Epistle to Artemisia. On Fame," and "The Headach'," Leapor, through the persona of

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[10]Roy Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society in England 1550-1860* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 24.

Mira, confronts the fundamental human predicament of trying to achieve a unified personality despite the ongoing conflict between body and mind. However, by the time she comes to write "Mira's Will," Leapor seems to have come to the conclusion that the only possible way to resolve this fundamental human conflict is through the great nullifying force of death. In other words, body and mind can become unified only when they are both nullified through death. Disease, as the agent of death, thus also becomes a potential site for the illustration as well as the resolution of the body/mind 'problem.'

In "Mira's Will," Leapor systematically resigns all the various facets of her being which, together, have instigated and sustained the ongoing conflict between her body and her mind:

> IMPRIMIS -- My departed Shade I trust
> To Heav'n -- My Body to the silent Dust;
> My Name to publick Censure I submit,
> To be dispos'd of as the World thinks fit;
> My Vice and Folly let Oblivion close,
> The World already is o'erstock'd with those;
> My Wit I give, as Misers give their Store,
> To those who think they had enough before.
> (*ML, PUSO*, I, 8, ll. 1-8)

It is interesting to note that, although Leapor commits her "departed Shade" to "Heav'n" while she commits her "Body to the silent Dust," she does not in any way appear to privilege either one constituent or destination over another. Instead, she focuses on the notion that Death affects the dissolution of both the union and the tension between Mind and Body. Being thus freed from the constant tension that, during her earthly lifetime, always had been her greatest

affliction insofar as it consistently threatened to undermine–or at least destabilize–her identity as an Author, Leapor is able to assert her ultimate and eternal claim to the identity of poet:

> Let a small Sprig (true Emblem of my Rhyme)
> Of blasted Laurel on my Hearse recline;
> Let some grave Wight, that struggles for Renown,
> By chanting Dirges through a Market-Town,
> With gentle Step precede the solemn Train;
> A broken Flute upon his Arm shall lean.
> Six comick Poets may the Corse surround,
> And All Free-holders, if they can be found:
> Then follow next the melancholy Throng,
> As shrewd Instructors, who themselves are wrong.
> The Virtuoso, rich in Sun-dry'd Weeds,
> The Politician, whom no Mortal heeds,
> The silent Lawyer, chamber'd all the Day,
> And the stern Soldier that receives no Pay.
> But stay -- the Mourners shou'd be first our Care,
> Let the freed Prentice lead the Miser's Heir;
> Let the young Relict wipe her mournful Eye,
> And widow'd Husbands o'er their Garlick cry.
> (*ML, PUSO*, I, 9, ll. 17-34)

Although unmistakably satiric, this verse-paragraph is clearly also a very forceful assertion of Mira's (and thus Leapor's) ultimate identity as a poet. Indeed, Mira's minute orchestration of her own funeral procession in these lines signifies an ultimate act of authorial authority. The funeral procession that Mira thus orchestrates becomes a satiric representation of the personal inconsistencies and social incongruities that she habitually exposes in her poetry, for the participants are "shrewd Instructors, who themselves are wrong." As such they unwittingly expose their own hypocrisy, or more broadly, they expose the inconsistencies of human life.

In "An Epistle to a Lady," which was probably written near the end of Leapor's life, we see Leapor engaging even more directly the notion of disease and death as potential sites for the illustration as well as the resolution of the body/mind 'problem.' Richard Greene argues that, "In a sense, this poem is the last stage in the 'mighty Conflict' referred to in 'Celadon to Mira'" (Greene, 201). This last stage of the 'mighty Conflict' sees Body and Mind finally united in submission to the degenerative force of disease:

> But see pale Sickness with her languid Eyes,
> At whose Appearance all Delusion flies:
> The World recedes, its Vanities decline,
> Clorinda's Features seem as faint as mine!
> Gay Robes no more the aching Sight admires,
> Wit grates the Ear, and melting Music tires:
> Its wonted pleasures with each sense decay,
> Books please no more, and paintings fade away,
> The sliding Joys in misty Vapours end:
> Yet let me still, Ah! let me grasp a Friend:
> And when each Joy, when each lov'd Object flies,
> Be you the last that leaves my closing Eyes.
> (*ML, PUSO*, I, 40, ll. 33-44)

For Leapor then, disease and death become reconciling agents which put a final–if arbitrarily-imposed–end to the conflict between body and mind. Sickness at once dulls the physical senses, making eyes "languid," and also 'decays' the mental capacity to enjoy the once-loved temporal pleasures that fashion, music and books used to afford. Leapor thus envisions sickness as a force which systematically nullifies and as a result unifies the human faculties of body and mind in order to prepare the soul to be liberated by death. But, whereas it was customary for many eighteenth-century poets, including Pope and Johnson, to portray this ultimate liberation of the soul by death as overwhelmingly positive,

Leapor's presentation of the state of the soul that has been separated from both body and mind by death is decidedly more ambivalent:

> But how will this dismantl'd Soul appear,
> When stripp'd of all it lately held so dear,
> Forc'd from its Prison of expiring Clay,
> Afraid and shiv'ring at the doubtful Way.
> (*ML, PUSO*, I, 40, ll. 45-48)

In these lines, Leapor both invokes and, to some extent, problematizes the conventional eighteenth-century notion of death liberating the soul from the body and releasing it directly into an eternally blissful state. In keeping with the topology of the conventional eighteenth-century portrayal of death as the liberator of the soul, Leapor depicts her body as a "Prison of expiring Clay." Significantly, however, the soul is not *released* from this prison, but is rather "Forc'd from" it; this would seem to indicate a certain level of ambivalence on the part of the soul towards its 'liberation.' This ambivalence is further reinforced and amplified by the fact that the newly liberated soul does not confidently rush forward to embrace its new state, but, rather, having been "dismantl'd" and "stripp'd of all it lately held so dear," it now stands on the threshold of eternity, "Afraid and shiv'ring at the doubtful Way." Since it seems to me that Greene is absolutely correct in asserting that Leapor's view of death was firmly based on her own strongly-held Christian convictions (Greene, 198), I would argue that the cause of the trepidation expressed in these lines is twofold: First of all, this fear is considered by Leapor to be the proper response of an earnest and upright soul to the prospect of standing before an omnipotent and holy God; but secondly, this kind of trepidation is also seen as a very natural and very human response to the

drastically altered state that is brought about by the abrupt severing of the connection and, with it, the constant–and, to some extent, grounding–tension between body and mind. In other words, not only does death 'dismantle' and 'strip' the soul of "all it lately held so dear," it also abruptly severs the link between body and mind, and, in doing so, it wipes out the plumbline on which its temporal identity had been centred.

The same sense of trepidation at the prospect of death severing the connection between body and mind that we see in "An Epistle to a Lady" is also at the centre of Leapor's "On Sickness." In this poem, Leapor again expresses apprehension at the prospect of the connection between body and mind being severed by death:

> The Pow'r who stamp'd the Reas'ning Mind,
> Its Partner can restore;
> There we a lasting Cordial find,
> And learn to sigh no more.
>
> But if the slow-consuming Ill
> Shou'd lead us to the Grave,
> Our Faith persuades us that he will
> The trembling Spirit save. (*ML, PUSO*, I, 266)

In an abrupt divergence from conventional eighteenth-century topology, Leapor presents body and mind, not as oppressive and destructive adversaries, but rather as "Partners." Indeed, in these lines, it is disease and death that appear as oppressive and destructive forces that mercilessly eat away at the elemental connection between body and mind, once again leaving the 'newly-liberated' spirit "trembling" on the brink of a decidedly uncertain eternity. Although Leapor's ultimate assertion that "Our Faith persuades us that he will / The trembling Spirit

save" is undoubtedly intended as a sincere affirmation that there is security in deliberately entrusting the eternal destiny of one's spirit to a just and loving God, this ultimate hope of eternal security by no means eradicates the prevailing sense of trepidation that seems to be the natural human response to the drastically altered state that is brought about by the abrupt severing of the connection between body and mind, a connection which provides the basis for human identity.

Conclusion

Although Mary Leapor did not have a readily-identifiable chronic illness or disability, her preoccupation with the personal realities of disease and debility in both her life and her work make her poems, in many ways, case studies of the conventional eighteenth-century view of the often adversarial interrelation between the workings of the mind and the workings of the body. Like her iconic mentor, Alexander Pope, Leapor engages dominant eighteenth-century cultural binary constructions of Mind versus Body from the perspective of one whose physical and social realities mark her out as an Other in the society that she is seeking to engage with and influence through her poetry. More specifically, we can see in poems such as "Celadon to Mira," "An Epistle to Artemisia. On Fame," "The Headach'," "Mira's Will," "An Epistle to a Lady" and "On Sickness," Leapor, in a manner that is strikingly similar to Pope, repeatedly and consistently invoking the social and physical disadvantages that mark her out as an Other in order to

construct herself as an afflicted yet committed Author. Thus, Leapor may indeed be considered "The successor of Pope"[11] insofar as her poetry both engages and interrogates the quintessential eighteenth-century problem of the mind/body dichotomy.

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[11] *ML, PUSO*, II, 278.

Chapter Five
The Good, The Bad, and The Other: Crip Characters in the Works of Charles Dickens

Introduction: Crip Writer, or TAB Author of Written Crips?: Dickens and the Temporariness of Being Able-Bodied

Like the Crip Writers in the eighteenth century, able-bodied authors in the nineteenth century who sought to create Written Crips had to engage with dominant social attitudes towards illness and disability. One of the most prolific and best-known authors of written crips in the nineteenth century is, of course, Charles Dickens. In fact, Dickens is widely known for populating his novels with characters who have a vast array of physical infirmities. Until recently, Dickens would have been unequivocally categorized as an able-bodied author who writes about crip characters, as opposed to a writer with disabilities who writes about disability. However, recent scholarship in the field of disability studies has drawn attention to the fact that, although he has traditionally been viewed as an able-bodied author, Dickens had a variety of recurrent physical and emotional ailments throughout his lifetime. In his 1990 biography of Dickens, Peter Ackroyd lists a number of significant and recurrent physical and emotional maladies that had a powerful impact on Dickens' life and work. These maladies included chronic kidney trouble, spasms and seizures which were almost certainly indicative of what would be diagnosed today as a form of epilepsy, chronic headaches and facial pain, as well as clinical depression. The fact that Dickens'

able-bodiedness was more temporary and tenuous than critics have traditionally made it out to be has significant implications for a study of crip writers and written crips in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Dickens demonstrates both the great tenuousness of any absolute distinction between crips and TABs (i.e., the Temporarily Able-Bodied), and also the great temptation and tendency for authors who are generally able to function as TABs in society to literally *write over* their own state of difference and to create characters with differences and disabilities that are consciously constructed as Others. In this sense, I think Dickens *can* legitimately be considered as a TAB author of written crips, for, although his various physical and psychological maladies *do* inevitably inform his writing, he clearly and consistently writes about ill and disabled characters as Others because he writes from the perspective of one who is able-bodied.

Dickensian Crips: Their Shapes, Forms and Ways

Dickens' predominant concern in his novels with issues of social injustice and the necessity for social change greatly impacts his portrayal of ill and disabled characters; for Dickens, illness and disability are often either directly caused by or are a more general metaphor for the widespread diseases of social inequality and injustice. This means that Dickens focusses less on how illness and disability impact the psychological and emotional state of individual characters than on the broader social contexts for, and implications of, illness and disability. Dickens' view of illness and disability as social phenomena rather

than individual affliction or punishment translates into his characteristically tropic presentation of ill and disabled characters as often stereotypical embodiments of the various social ills plaguing Victorian England. Any examination of the various constructions of illness and disability in Dickens' novels must therefore include a careful consideration of the ways in which these ill and disabled characters either conform to or deviate from conventional Victorian readings of ill and disabled bodies. Leonard Kriegel has argued that disabled characters in literature can typically be placed into one of the following categories: the Demonic Cripple, the Charity Cripple, the Survivor Cripple and the Realistic Cripple. In this chapter, I will use the first three of Kriegel's four categories as a framework for my examination of Dickens' portrayal of ill and disabled characters in his fiction.

Even a cursory initial overview of Dickens' published works soon reveals the proliferation and prominence of ill and disabled characters throughout his fiction. Indeed, Dickens populates his novels and novellas with a wide variety of crip characters that are as fundamentally different in personality as the pitiful but pious Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* and the dastardly and despicable Daniel Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. This character continuum of Dickensian crips is filled in by more complex and, at times, perplexing figures such as Jenny Wren, the dwarfish articulator of bodies in *Our Mutual Friend*, the physically deformed and therefore morally suspect Miss Mowcher in *David Copperfield* and the oppressed yet indomitable dwarf called the Marchioness in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. For all their physical, psychological and emotional differences however, Dickensian crip characters can, by and large, be classified into three main types:

the Pathetic/Charity Crip, the Evil/Controlling Crip and the Plucky/Persevering Crip. It seems to me that Dickens very strategically constructs the deformed and disabled bodies of characters Tiny Tim, Daniel Quilp, Jenny Wren and others in such a way as to render readable the correlation between body, mind and spirit. Furthermore, Dickens then expands the lexical reading of these deformed and disabled bodies to incorporate the indelible marks of social inequality, corruption and injustice. Dickens thus creates his crip characters as fragmented embodiments of the best and the worst of Victorian England.

The Pathetic/Charity Crip

Unquestionably, the type of crip character with which Dickens is most commonly associated in the popular culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is what Leonard Kriegel has called the "Charity Cripple." Charity or Pathetic Cripples are largely one-dimensional crip characters who exhibit virtually total dependence on the TABs around them; indeed their continued survival is, to some extent, contingent upon the benevolence, good will and, sometimes, even self-sacrificial care of the TABs in their lives. The best-known of all crips in Dickensian fiction–and, arguably, in fiction as a whole–namely Tiny Tim in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, is indeed the prototype of the Charity Cripple. As Leslie A. Fiedler has argued, Tiny Tim stands, or rather sits, as the archetypal pitiful disabled child, an archetype that has its successors in literature as well as in life:

> If there is an image of the handicapped stronger, more obsessive even than that of the sinister senex with a hump or a hook, it is that of the pitiful puer embodied in the crippled boy forever perched on Bob Cratchit's threadbare shoulder: "Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!" [49] Pale, microminiaturized and presumably moribund, he threatens no one, only appeals for our sympathy and our help, calling on God to bless us every one whether we respond or not. It was his image which presided over the founding of charitable institutions ... to care for "crippled children." And his image has remained in the years since Victoria, when so much else has been desacralized, an ikon as "sacred" in its way as that of the Christ child at his Virgin Mother's breast; though also as vulgarly cheerful-tearful and as commercially visible as the Easter seal cripple-of-the-year, which descends directly from it. (67)

Although Fiedler's touting of Tiny Tim as a quasi-sacred icon which has spawned such modern-day descendants as the Easter seal cripple-of-the-year may raise serious questions as to whether Dickens' most popular crip has helped or harmed the cause of people with disabilities, the fact remains that Tiny Tim, though largely bereft of any real individuality, is of tremendous significance as the prototype of an entire class of crip which can be seen throughout English literature:

> The Charity Cripple is far easier for the "normals" to handle. At least, as an image, he is. What he is remains the shadow of how he is seen. He exists to soothe ... Characters such as Black Guineau and Tiny Tim are intended to draw out the charitable impulses of a middle-class audience. They enthral because they relieve both guilt and the need to look directly at the other ... In *A Christmas Carol*, Tiny Tim is Scrooge's Totem. One almost senses that Dickens, in his heart of hearts, had designed a scene in which Scrooge would be transformed into kindly Uncle Ebenezer by rubbing his hands on Tiny Tim's crutches. (Kriegel, 35-36)

The point Kriegel makes about Tiny Tim's latent redemptive powers is an important one. Indeed, most of the overtly Christian sentiments related to forgiveness and healing in the story are associated with Tiny Tim. Witness Bob Cratchit's account to his wife of Tiny Tim's behaviour in church:

> "And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.
>
> "As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see." (50)

I think it no coincidence that the only direct reference to Christ in this Christmas story is attributed to the crip, Tiny Tim. His status as a Charity Cripple endows him with a unique kind of spiritual insight; as his father observes, "Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard."

And yet, for all the emphasis that Dickens places on Tiny Tim's Otherness as a Charity Cripple, he will occasionally highlight subtle details about Tiny Tim's behaviour which would suggest that he is, in essence, an ordinary kid. Later in this scene, Dickens describes Tiny Tim's reentry into the room, "His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire" (50). Despite the fact that Tim must still be "escorted" to his stool by his brother and sister, the description of the sound of his "active little crutch" upon the floor

indicates that Tim is not merely a helpless, will-less little bundle of pathos merely to be schlepped around according to the inclinations of his siblings. Rather, the sound of his "active little crutch" upon the floor alerts readers–if only implicitly–to the notion that Tiny Tim is a little boy who is, in many ways, much like any other little boy.

Another clear, if somewhat muted, indication that Tiny Tim is something other than a saintly, prototypical poster-boy for the virtues of charity is the fact that his attitude towards Scrooge throughout the story remains rather ambivalent: "Tiny Tim drank [the toast to Scrooge] last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it" (53). Nevertheless, Tiny Tim has made his way into the annals of literary history not as a child bearing justifiable resentment towards the miser who idly stands by and allows his family to suffer, but rather as the pious, benign crippled child whose only function is to evoke sympathy and to be a constant reminder to all of the universal human dependence on divine providence. Thus, it seems that Dickens, consciously or subconsciously, chooses to downplay, and perhaps even stifle, Tiny Tim's individuality and humanity in order to create the prototype for the Charity Cripple.

Late in his article, Fiedler raises an interesting and important point about Dickens' treatment of Tiny Tim's potential demise:

> What is most fascinating and revealing about Dickens' yuletide fable (aside from the fact that it managed to take Christ out of Christmas without offending the pious) is that in one of its two time sequences Tiny Tim dies, while in the other he survives. We are privileged, therefore, both to weep (with whatever covert relish) over his demise, his ceasing to exist, and to rejoice (with whatever secret regrets) over his

> ceasing to be a cripple. Dickens' tale, that is to say, provides us with two scenarios: in the first of which, the puer is doomed by the refusal of the equivocal senex, Scrooge, to render him the support owed by the able-bodied rich to the disabled "deserving poor"; and in the second of which, he learns to give what is due them "and infinitely more." [87]
>
> Oddly enough, however, though the author and the text ask us to believe that it is the latter Happy Ending which "really" happened, it is described only in a few grudging words assuring us that "Tiny Tim did NOT die..." [87]; while the bleak alternative, despite the fact that it is presented as "only a dream," gets some two or three pages, as if to make clear that the purest, most disinterested pity tends to linger long over catastrophe, with which it is more than half in love. More consciously, of course, A Christmas Carol was written to persuade us that the plight of the disabled can always be alleviated by philanthropy, which is to say, money and love in the proper portions. (68)

While I basically agree with Fiedler's conclusion that "A Christmas Carol was written to persuade us that the plight of the disabled can always be alleviated by philanthropy," I think his antecedent assertions that the possible unhappy ending in which Tiny Tim dies is meant to evoke some sort of perverse delight in the reader and that the actual Happy Ending is really happy only because Tiny Tim "ceas[es] to be a cripple" are much less sound. While it may be true that "pity tends to linger long over catastrophe, with which it is more than half in love," it is equally true that pity cannot continue to exist when its object is removed. The wish, secret though it may be, to have the Other removed is based on fear, not pity; and since Fiedler's entire argument is (rightly) based on the assertion that Tiny Tim was created to elicit feelings of pity rather than fear, it seems quite illogical for Fiedler to go on to imply that the reader is meant to derive some sort of perverse pleasure from Tiny Tim's imagined demise. Equally erroneous is

Fiedler's contention (which is possibly borrowed from various film adaptations of the *Carol*) that the happiness of the actual Happy Ending lies in the fact that Tiny Tim "ceas[es] to be a cripple." In actuality, there is no mention in the text that Tiny Tim undergoes any kind of miraculous healing; the narrator merely assures us that Tiny Tim "did NOT die" (87). It is rather Scrooge who undergoes a miraculous healing, a healing that is spiritual instead of physical, and Tiny Tim who facilitates this healing by becoming the object of Scrooge's newly-developed charitable impulses. Thus, far from being ultimately liberated from his role as the archetypal Charity Cripple, Tiny Tim, at the end of the story, is cast as the recipient of long-overdue charity.

Following the hobbling, uneven footsteps of Tiny Tim is Bertha Plummer, a much lesser-known Charity Cripple from Dickens' third and (in his time) best-selling Christmas book, *The Cricket on the Hearth*. Known throughout most of the novella simply as "the Blind Girl," Bertha Plummer is portrayed in many ways as even more helpless, pathetic and dependent on the charity of TABs for her continued emotional and physical survival than is Tiny Tim. From the time that Dickens first introduces Bertha Plummer into the action of the story, she is clearly portrayed as a helpless and pathetic Charity Cripple who is totally dependent–physically and emotionally dependent–the self-sacrificial care of her poor and elderly father:

> I have said that Caleb and his poor Blind Daughter lived here. I should have said that Caleb lived here, and his poor Blind Daughter somewhere else in an enchanted home of Caleb's furnishing, where scarcity and shabbiness were not, and trouble never entered. Caleb was no sorcerer, but in

> the only magic art that still remains to us, the magic of devoted, deathless love, Nature had been the mistress of his study; and from her teaching, all the wonder came.
>
> The Blind Girl never knew that ceilings were discoloured, walls blotched and bare of plaster here and there, high crevices unstopped and widening every day, beams mouldering and tending downward. The Blind Girl never knew that iron was rusting, wood rotting, paper peeling off; the size, and shape, and true proportion of the dwelling, withering away. The Blind Girl never knew that ugly shapes of delf and earthenware were on the board; that sorrow and faintheartedness were in the house; that Caleb's scanty hairs were turning greyer and more grey, before her sightless face. The Blind Girl never knew they had a master, cold, exacting, and uninterested, never knew that Tackleton was Tackleton in short; but lived in the belief of an eccentric humourist who loved to have his jest with them, and who, while he was the Guardian Angel of their lives, disdained to hear one word of thankfulness. (*Cricket*, e-text p. 22)

To a great extent, this passage sets the tone for Dickens' portrayal of Bertha Plummer–aka "The Blind Girl"–throughout the novella. To begin with, the very fact that Bertha is not referred to by name, but is rather referred to simply as "The Blind Girl" indicates that her character is totally defined by her blindness. Furthermore, Dickens makes it painfully evident that Bertha's blindness is not just physical, for her physical blindness enables her father to 'keep her in the dark' about the fact that they are living in abject poverty, "The Blind Girl never knew that ceilings were discoloured, walls blotched and bare of plaster here and there, high crevices unstopped and widening every day, beams mouldering and tending downward ... The Blind Girl never knew that ugly shapes of delf and earthenware were on the board; that sorrow and faintheartedness were in the house; that Caleb's scanty hairs were turning greyer and more grey, before her sightless face." Bertha's physical blindness thus causes her to be kept in a perpetual

childlike innocence and ignorance, and this is what makes her truly a Pathetic/Charity Cripple.

In contrast to Tiny Tim, whose physical disability is figured as a source through which he attains moral insight far beyond his years, "The Blind Girl," Bertha Plummer, is clearly and consistently portrayed as one whose physical blindness is metaphorically symptomatic of a deep-seated emotional and psychological blindness. As Elisabeth G. Gitter argues, the association of physical blindness with ignorance and of physical sight with enlightenment is a conventional Victorian leitmotif which Dickens weaves throughout *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and which he personifies most transparently in the character of Bertha:

> The ocular theme of Tobit and Tobias, of the returning son who restores sight to the blind father, is reenacted when Dot playfully covers Caleb's eyes with her hands until he recognizes the voice of Edward, the son he had thought dead in "the Golden South Americas" (pp. 266-77). In Jacques Derrida's terms, the son, the "light of his father's eyes," restores the father's vision when he makes himself known to his father; "he restores his sight in making himself visible and in order to make himself visible." The return of Caleb's sight is celebrated in a series of injunctions to "see" and to "look" at the long-lost son: "'He is alive!' shrieked Dot, removing her hands from his [Caleb's] eyes, and clapping them in ecstasy; 'look at him! See where he stands before you, healthy and strong!'" (p. 267).
>
> Blind Bertha alludes unmistakably to the stock recognition scenes of melodrama when she says of Dot, "If I could be restored to sight this instant and not a word spoken, I could choose her from a crowd! My sister!" (p. 261). And, of course, the theatrics of ocular cure are most explicitly evoked when Bertha, told the truth about her father's "innocent deception," cries out, "It is my sight restored! It is my sight! . . . I have been blind, and now my

> eyes are open . . . I am NOT blind, father, any longer!" (pp. 264-5). (Gitter, 678-679)

It is important to keep in mind, however, that even though Bertha is ultimately disabused of her father's "innocent deception" regarding their living conditions, and even though she thus passes from a state of total innocence and attains a certain degree of enlightenment, she nevertheless remains largely excluded from the social/sexual economy that functions as the foundation for "normal" adult life in Victorian England. Because Bertha's sole purpose in the novella is to function as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple, her romantic infatuation with the despicable Tackleton remains in the realm of the impossible-if-not-ludicrous, even after Tackleton is reformed. Gitter notes that, "a marriage between a reformed Tackleton and a blind Bertha cannot be more than a vague and passing suggestion, ruefully made and foreclosed at once by Tackleton's embrace of old Mrs. Fielding in the final dance. For Dickens as, perhaps, for many of us, blindness is too frightening, too evocative (in Freud's terms) of the uncanny, to be incorporated into a happy domestic ending" (684). Even more than Tiny Tim, who becomes an active catalyst for Scrooge's reformation by being the passive recipient of his charity, Bertha Plummer remains virtually excluded from any significant participation in her community because she remains shut out of the social/sexual economy that forms the basis of community interaction.

As helpless and–in the truest sense of the word–pathetic as are Tiny Tim and Bertha Plummer, I would argue that the Dickensian crip that most compellingly embodies the quintessential qualities of the Pathetic/Charity Cripple

is the lame-limbed and vaguely feeble-minded Smike in *Nicholas Nickleby*. From the very first moment he lays eyes on Smike, the young hero, Nicholas, seems almost painfully overwhelmed with pity for this hapless and helpless fellow-victim of the cruel Mr. Squeers:

> Mr Squeers was emptying his great-coat pockets of letters to different boys, and other small documents, which he had brought down in them. The boy glanced, with an anxious and timid expression, at the papers, as if with a sickly hope that one among them might relate to him. The look was a very painful one, and went to Nicholas's heart at once; for it told a long and very sad history.
>
> It induced him to consider the boy more attentively, and he was surprised to observe the extraordinary mixture of garments which formed his dress. Although he could not have been less than eighteen or nineteen years old, and was tall for that age, he wore a skeleton suit, such as is usually put upon very little boys, and which, though most absurdly short in the arms and legs, was quite wide enough for his attenuated frame. In order that the lower part of his legs might be in perfect keeping with this singular dress, he had a very large pair of boots, originally made for tops, which might have been once worn by some stout farmer, but were now too patched and tattered for a beggar. Heaven knows how long he had been there, but he still wore the same linen which he had first taken down; for, round his neck, was a tattered child's frill, only half concealed by a coarse, man's neckerchief. He was lame; and as he feigned to be busy in arranging the table, glanced at the letters with a look so keen, and yet so dispirited and hopeless, that Nicholas could hardly bear to watch him. (NN, e-text p. 86)

Throughout this passage introducing Smike into the main action of the novel, Dickens deliberately and repeatedly uses words and phrases which evoke and highlight the incongruousness and consequent pathos inherent in his character. His expression is "anxious and timid"; he is eighteen or nineteen years old and tall for his age, yet he wears "a skeleton suit, such as is usually put upon very

little boys, and which, though most absurdly short in the arms and legs, was quite wide enough for his attenuated frame." Further accentuating the pathos of Smike's character is the fact that he has an obvious physical disability–he is "lame." Smike's lameness, combined with his emotional dispiritedness and his intellectual slowness, make him a most pathetic figure who is most deserving of whatever feelings and acts of sympathy and kindness that the also-suffering Nicholas can give.

While it is clear that Smike's status as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple is based on a combination of his emotional deprivation, his physical lameness and his intellectual slowness, it is equally evident that most of the pathos in Dickens' portrayal of Smike is centered upon–to insert a late-twentieth-century disability advocacy term–his developmental delays. In his essay "Dickens and Memory," Mitsuharu Matsuoka discusses the centrality of Smike's intellectual slowness to his portrayal and function in the novel in compelling, if somewhat less politically correct, terms:

> Among Dickens's earlier works Nicholas Nickleby (1838-9) could be selected as a novel of memory. After Nicholas rescues Smike, the favourite target of Squeers's brutality at Dotheboys Hall, the grateful Smike follows him about afterwards with a dog-like devotion. As they make their way to Portsmouth, Nicholas asks Smike if he has "a good memory" (NN, 273). From their conversation we learn that Smike "began to lose [his] recollection" after hard use by Squeers and his family. The wrongs he suffered at the school have ruined his sense of identity as well as his memory. His amnesia suggests that both identity and intellect can be damaged by emotional and physical trauma in childhood. Let us not forget, however, that Dickens portrays Smike as an 'idiot savant' similar to Miss Flite in *Bleak House* (1852-3). Natalie McKnight overlooks this,

> although she regards Smike's role as structurally significant: "the posthumous discovery of his parentage serves as the central revelation in the resolution of the plot". Smike retains a vivid remembrance of the place where he slept as a little boy (NN, 274). Dickens gives Smike specific, accurate knowledge in his memory of his boyhood. This memory, repressed by the terrors of Dotheboys Hall, is refreshed and revived with Nicholas's encouragement after his rescue. More importantly, perhaps, Dickens makes paradoxical use here of the idiot's tenacious memory to foreshadow the disclosures that come later, that Smike and Nicholas are, quite literally, related characters; that they are, in fact, cousins. (Matsuoka, 40)

In this passage, Matsuoka touches on two aspects of Smike's character that are crucial elements in his construction as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple, namely his portrayal as an "idiot savant" and his grateful "dog-like devotion" to Nicholas for rescuing him from the terrors of Dotheboys Hall. Smike can thus indeed be said to bear a striking resemblance to the "zealous little Miss Flite" in *Bleak House*. His savant capabilities notwithstanding, Smike's intellectual deficiency–the fact that, to use Matsuoka's term, he is an "idiot"–means that he remains in constant need of Nicholas's protective care throughout the novel. Thus, like Tiny Tim and Bertha Plummer, Smike's continued ability to survive in the world is shown to be totally contingent on the continued altruism of his TAB companion, Nicholas. In turn, Smike fulfills his role as a good Pathetic/Charity Cripple by giving Nicholas his undying gratitude and devotion:

> He had not heard anybody enter, and was unconscious of the presence of Smike, until, happening to raise his head, he saw him, standing at the upper end of the room, looking wistfully towards him. He withdrew his eyes when he saw that he was observed, and affected to be busied with some scanty preparations for dinner.

> "Well, Smike," said Nicholas, as cheerfully as he could speak, "let me hear what new acquaintances you have made this morning, or what new wonder you have found out, in the compass of this street and the next one."
>
> "No," said Smike, shaking his head mournfully; "I must talk of something else today."
>
> "Of what you like," replied Nicholas, good-humouredly.
>
> "Of this," said Smike. "I know you are unhappy, and have got into great trouble by bringing me away. I ought to have known that, and stopped behind--I would, indeed, if I had thought it then. You--you--are not rich; you have not enough for yourself, and I should not be here. You grow," said the lad, laying his hand timidly on that of Nicholas, "you grow thinner every day; your cheek is paler, and your eye more sunk. Indeed I cannot bear to see you so, and think how I am burdening you. I tried to go away today, but the thought of your kind face drew me back. I could not leave you without a word." The poor fellow could say no more, for his eyes filled with tears, and his voice was gone.
>
> "The word which separates us," said Nicholas, grasping him heartily by the shoulder, "shall never be said by me, for you are my only comfort and stay. I would not lose you now, Smike, for all the world could give. The thought of you has upheld me through all I have endured today, and shall, through fifty times such trouble. Give me your hand. My heart is linked to yours. We will journey from this place together, before the week is out. What, if I am steeped in poverty? You lighten it, and we will be poor together." (NN, ch. 20, e-text pp. 268-269)

It is important to note that, while Dickens clearly maintains his construction of 'poor Smike' as the recipient of the charitable watch-care of able-bodied and able-minded Nicholas throughout the novel, he does also present in this passage a strong sense of the reciprocal nature of the friendship between Nicholas and Smike. Indeed Nicholas' spontaneous declaration, "I would not lose you now, Smike, for all the world could give. The thought of you has upheld me through all I have endured today, and shall, through fifty times such trouble," attests to the

fact that he considers Smike a true and valued friend rather than merely a burdensome obligation. Even so, Smike himself seems keenly and painfully aware of the burden that his continued protection and care has placed upon Nicholas, for he laments, "I know you are unhappy, and have got into great trouble by bringing me away." Being the good Pathetic/Charity Cripple that he is, Smike remains ever conscious of the burden that, by definition, he is to Nicholas, and is consequently compelled to perpetual gratitude–what Matsuoka calls "dog-like devotion"–to Nicholas for his willingness to bear the burden of continuing to protect and care for him.

Another very significant way in which Smike is marked out as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple is through his automatic exclusion from the social/sexual economy that forms the basis of community interaction. Like Bertha Plummer, Smike harbours a secret love for a TAB, namely Nicholas's sister Kate. But whereas Bertha's infatuation with Tackleton is based entirely on her own delusions, it is evident that Smike's affection for Kate is based on his gratitude for her genuine kindness to him. The authenticity of both her kindness and his gratitude is firmly established during their first encounter:

> Poor Smike was bashful, and awkward, and frightened enough, at first, but Kate advanced towards him so kindly, and said, in such a sweet voice, how anxious she had been to see him after all her brother had told her, and how much she had to thank him for having comforted Nicholas so greatly in their very trying reverses, that he began to be very doubtful whether he should shed tears or not, and became still more flurried. However, he managed to say, in a broken voice, that Nicholas was his only friend, and that he would lay down his life to help him; and Kate, although she was so kind and considerate, seemed to be so wholly unconscious

> of his distress and embarrassment, that he recovered almost immediately and felt quite at home. (NN, Ch. 35, e-text p. 461)

The same innate ability to recognize and appreciate a good TAB when he meets one that first draws Smike to Nicholas is also the basis for Smike's attraction to Kate. Her immediate comfortableness around him despite his physical and intellectual awkwardness puts him at ease and makes him feel "quite at home." Kate, for her part, is presented as being a genuinely good TAB–not only to Smike, but also to her hearing-impaired mother:

> With which remarks, Mrs Nickleby turned to her daughter, and inquired, in an audible whisper, whether the gentleman was going to stop all night.
>
> "Because, if he is, Kate, my dear," said Mrs Nickleby, "I don't see that it's possible for him to sleep anywhere, and that's the truth."
>
> Kate stepped gracefully forward, and without any show of annoyance or irritation, breathed a few words into her mother's ear.
>
> "La, Kate, my dear," said Mrs Nickleby, shrinking back, "how you do tickle one! Of course, I understand THAT, my love, without your telling me; and I said the same to Nicholas, and I AM very much pleased." (NN, Ch. 35, e-text p. 462)

Here we see Kate exhibiting a number of specific qualities that make her a good TAB: she is patient with her mother's denseness, as well as her deafness, and she provides the needed assistance with tact, efficiency, and grace. Clearly, she shares her brother's sympathetic and giving spirit.

It can therefore come as no surprise to the perceptive reader when Smike begins to exhibit overt signs that he is falling in love with Kate, even though this fact seems to remain almost inconceivable to the other characters in the novel.

Upon returning after being rescued from the clutches of Squeers, Smike makes no attempt to conceal his delight at learning that Kate had been worried about him:

> "No, no. Has SHE thought about me?" said Smike. "Has she though? oh, has she, has she? Don't tell me so if she has not."
>
> "She has," cried Newman. "She is as noble-hearted as she is beautiful."
>
> "Yes, yes!" cried Smike. "Well said!"
>
> "So mild and gentle," said Newman.
>
> "Yes, yes!" cried Smike, with increasing eagerness. "And yet with such a true and gallant spirit," pursued Newman.
>
> He was going on, in his enthusiasm, when, chancing to look at his companion, he saw that he had covered his face with his hands, and that tears were stealing out between his fingers.
>
> A moment before, the boy's eyes were sparkling with unwonted fire, and every feature had been lighted up with an excitement which made him appear, for the moment, quite a different being.
>
> "Well, well," muttered Newman, as if he were a little puzzled. "It has touched ME, more than once, to think such a nature should have been exposed to such trials; this poor fellow--yes, yes,--he feels that too--it softens him--makes him think of his former misery.
>
> Hah! That's it? Yes, that's--hum!"
>
> It was by no means clear, from the tone of these broken reflections, that Newman Noggs considered them as explaining, at all satisfactorily, the emotion which had suggested them. He sat, in a musing attitude, for some time, regarding Smike occasionally with an anxious and doubtful glance, which sufficiently showed that he was not very remotely connected with his thoughts.
> (NN Ch. 40, E-text p. 529)

Newman's apparent total inability to imagine a cause for Smike's erratic mood swings during their conversation about Smike's recent abduction and, more specifically, Kate's concern for him, may indeed seem a case of inexplicable

denseness at first. However, when one reflects on the fact that Smike's developmental delays would cause most people to assume him simply incapable of entertaining romantic feelings of any sort, Newman's cluelessness becomes somewhat less bewildering. For a crip–especially an "idiot savant" like Smike–to fall in love with a TAB, especially a specimen of TAB perfection like Kate, would, for most people, simply be beyond the realm of the plausible, or even the possible. Consequently, Smike's involuntary exhibition of any kind of ardent feelings for Kate leaves even his otherwise accepting ally, Newman Noggs, with a palpable sense of unease.

Tellingly, Newmann's sense of unease and his resistance to even acknowledging the possibility that a crip like Smike could fall in love with a perfect TAB like Kate is shared by Mrs. Nickleby and, very likely, by Kate herself. This is evidenced by the generally-proclaimed bewilderment over Smike's sudden moodiness:

> "Ah! where is Mr Smike?" said Mrs Nickleby; "he was here this instant."
>
> Upon further inquiry, it turned out, to the good lady's unbounded astonishment, that Smike had, that moment, gone upstairs to bed.
>
> "Well now," said Mrs Nickleby, "he is the strangest creature! Last Tuesday--was it Tuesday? Yes, to be sure it was; you recollect, Kate, my dear, the very last time young Mr Cheeryble was here--last Tuesday night he went off in just the same strange way, at the very moment the knock came to the door. It cannot be that he don't like company, because he is always fond of people who are fond of Nicholas, and I am sure young Mr Cheeryble is. And the strangest thing is, that he does not go to bed; therefore it cannot be because he is tired. I know he doesn't go to bed, because my room is the next one, and when I went upstairs last Tuesday, hours after him, I found that he had not even

> taken his shoes off; and he had no candle, so he must have sat moping in the dark all the time. Now, upon my word," said Mrs Nickleby, "when I come to think of it, that's very extraordinary!"
>
> As the hearers did not echo this sentiment, but remained profoundly silent, either as not knowing what to say, or as being unwilling to interrupt, Mrs Nickleby pursued the thread of her discourse after her own fashion.
> (NN, Ch 49, E-text pp. 657-658)

Just like Newman Noggs, Mrs. Nickleby is at a total loss when it comes to understanding and explaining Smike's recent moodiness. Although she is perceptive enough to register the fact that Smike's moodiness seems to come on whenever Mr. Cheeryble visits, it evidently never enters her mind that he could be jealous of Mr. Cheeryble as Kate's suitor. And while it is true that Mrs. Nickleby is not known for her penetrating powers of comprehension, it again seems to me that the possibility that the amiable-yet-mentally-deficient Smike could ever develop romantic feelings for anyone–let alone Kate–would never even enter her mind. Perhaps even more telling is the awkward silence that falls over the assembled group after Mrs. Nickleby makes her unwittingly revealing observation. Indeed, the awkward silence of both Mr. Cheeryble and the usually unflappable Kate seems to indicate the likelihood that it has actually entered their minds that the real reason for Smike's moodiness is that he is in love with Kate and jealous of Mr. Cheeryble, and that this very thought is a source of considerable discomfort for both of them. This discomfort, I would argue, goes beyond the 'normal' awkwardness that would have arisen had Smike been able-bodied and thus been recognized, however implicitly, as a potential rival for Kate's affections. It rather seems to me that the awkward discomfort of both Mr.

Cheeryble and Kate is caused by the realization that Smike is in danger of transgressing his established and accepted social role as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple by falling in love with Kate.

Smike himself is both aware of and concerned by the fact that his love for Kate puts him at risk of violating his established and accepted social role as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple. It is for this reason that Smike makes every effort to keep his love for Kate secret. Smike's resolve not to divulge his love for Kate remains so strong that he does not even reveal it to his best friend, Nicholas, until he is on the verge of death:

> "I must tell you something, first. I should not have a secret from you. You would not blame me, at a time like this, I know."
>
> "I blame you!" exclaimed Nicholas.
>
> "I am sure you would not. You asked me why I was so changed, and--and sat so much alone. Shall I tell you why?"
>
> "Not if it pains you," said Nicholas. "I only asked that I might make you happier, if I could."
>
> "I know. I felt that, at the time." He drew his friend closer to him. "You will forgive me; I could not help it, but though I would have died to make her happy, it broke my heart to see--I know he loves her dearly--Oh! who could find that out so soon as I?"
>
> The words which followed were feebly and faintly uttered, and broken by long pauses; but, from them, Nicholas learnt, for the first time, that the dying boy, with all the ardour of a nature concentrated on one absorbing, hopeless, secret passion, loved his sister Kate.
>
> He had procured a lock of her hair, which hung at his breast, folded in one or two slight ribbons she had worn. He prayed that, when he was dead, Nicholas would take it off, so that no eyes but his might see it, and that when he was laid in his coffin and about to be placed in the earth, he would hang it round his neck again, that it might rest with him in the grave. (NN. Ch. 58, E-text p. 778)

By thus enlisting Nicholas's promise to keep his love for Kate a secret, Smike manages to die with his position as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple still firmly intact. In death, as in life, Smike remains indebted to his faithful TAB, Nicholas, for his continued care and his protection of the one great secret of Smike's life, namely his love for Kate. An open revelation of his love during his lifetime, or possibly even after his death, would surely have threatened to undermine his position as a Pathetic/Charity Cripple in that it would have constituted a degree of agency which is fundamentally incompatible with this literary stereotype. Such a declaration of love by Smike would, furthermore, demonstrate what many would consider a wholly inappropriate desire on the part of a crip to manoeuver his way into a social milieu that has been reserved entirely for TABs, namely the marriage-market. However, Smike's unwavering resolve to keep his love a secret ensures that he lives and dies a Pathetic/Charity Cripple in good standing--so to speak.

The Evil Crip

Sitting at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Pathetic/Charity Cripple is the Evil Crip, a literary stereotype that Leonard Kriegel refers to as the "Demonic Cripple." As Kriegel explains the Evil/Demonic Cripple is singularly driven by a self-centered need for vengeance on the "normal" population:

> Something has been done -- *and it has been done to him*! He is demonic because, like Shakespeare's deformed king [Richard III], he must now spend his remaining life

> resisting categorization. His existence is predicated on the need not to become what he believes the world demands him to become. As a result, he has no choice but to enact the role of the Demonic Cripple ... Like Shakespeare's Richard, he cannot help but see accident as victimization and he is enraged by victimization. Indeed, for Richard, the accident is uncovered in the very fact of his birth: from the beginning, he has been "rudely stamped," "cheated of feature," "deformed, unfinished," a man "sent into this breathing world, scarce half made up" ...
>
> The Demonic Cripple burns with his need for vengeance. Because of this, he frightens the normals. He is too singular, too focused on his wound [that is, the emotional, psychological, and social stigmas inflicted on him by his disability] and the needs that wound has created within him. As a consequence, he threatens to unleash a rage so powerful that it will bring everything down in its wake. The visible fact of his infirmity offers no solace to other men, because he himself is quite willing to accept the idea that his accident is his essence. His image becomes, both for him and for normals, the very center of the threat he embodies. His accident gnaws at his insides, leaves him no peace, consumes his every breathing moment, so that he cuts himself off from ordinary pursuits and ordinary men. Indeed, he despises their values, questions their successes, holds fast to the center of his own existence, the wound he so visibly bears. (Kriegel, 8)

Unquestionably, the qualities of the Evil/Demonic Cripple as Kriegel has thus enumerated them–namely, the obsession with his "wound," and the consequent isolation and all-consuming desire to enact "vengeance" upon the "normals"–are all most compellingly and memorably brought together and embodied in the character of Daniel Quilp in Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*. While this dwarf who makes his first entrance into the curiosity shop carrying his bag of gold may initially seem like a one-dimensional fairytale villain who stepped from the pages of an ancient storybook, he is actually a complex and driven character, a chameleon capable of assuming many different forms: "Rumpelstiltskin and ogre,

bad angel and stepfather, usurer and landlord, husband and rapist" (Westland, 69).

Kriegel locates the "wound" as the focal point of the Evil/Demonic Cripple's identity. In Quilp's case, this central wound encompasses and is reflected throughout his entire body to the extent that even an ostensibly objective description of his physical appearance resonates with an air of distastefulness, if not outright foreboding:

> The child was closely followed by an elderly man of remarkably hard features and forbidding aspect, and so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf, though his head and face were large enough for the body of a giant. His black eyes were restless, sly, and cunning; his mouth and chin, bristly with the stubble of a coarse hard beard; and his complexion was one of that kind which never looks clean or wholesome. But what added most to the grotesque expression of his face was a ghastly smile, which, appearing to be the mere result of habit and to have no connection with any mirthful or complacent feeling, constantly revealed the few discoloured fangs that were yet scattered in his mouth, and gave him the aspect of a panting dog. His dress consisted of a large high-crowned hat, a worn dark suit, a pair of capacious shoes, and a dirty white neckerchief sufficiently limp and crumpled to disclose the greater portion of his wiry throat. Such hair as he had was of a grizzled black, cut short and straight upon his temples, and hanging in a frowzy fringe about his ears. His hands, which were of a rough, coarse grain, were very dirty; his fingernails were crooked, long, and yellow. (*The Old Curiosity Shop*, Ch. 3, E-text p. 19)

The first disturbing fact about Quilp's physical appearance that this passage highlights is that, much like Victor Frankenstein's monster, his body seems to be made up of a series of various grossly mismatched parts and characteristics: he is "an elderly man" though he has "remarkably hard features and [a] forbidding aspect," and he is "so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf, though his head and

face were large enough for the body of a giant." Adding to the grotesqueness of these corporeal incongruities are a number of very distinctly animalistic and even monstrous qualities. For example, rather than having a mouthful of teeth, Quilp has a few "discoloured fangs ... scattered in his mouth, [giving] him the aspect of a panting dog." Furthermore, in language that is reminiscent of Johnson's description of the hygienic 'challenges' which are apparently caused by Pope's physical (and possibly, psychological) deformities, Dickens emphasizes Quilp's physical uncleanliness, "His hands, which were of a rough, coarse grain, were very dirty; his fingernails were crooked, long, and yellow." Consciously echoing eighteenth-century humoral theory, which posits a direct connection between physical deformity and moral depravity, Dickens thus strategically connects Quilp's unwholesome and even monstrous physical traits with a malevolence of character, a malevolence which, although still undefined, flows directly out of the "wound" that marks him out as a crip.

In accordance with Kriegel's conception of the Evil/Demonic Cripple, Quilp is driven by a need to enact "vengeance" upon the "normals." This desire manifests itself in a lust for power. As Ella Westland points out, "He likes to own people's dwellings (and by extension their inhabitants), to force them to work for him. In the counting-house he tortures a huge wooden sailor, symbolizing his terrible design of denying people their humanity and subjecting them to his cruel whims" (69). Quilp's vengeful lust for power over the "normals" is, of course, epitomized in his perverse sexual obsession with Little Nell. Quilp's monstrous obsession with Nell and the reality of the sexual threat he poses to her are

established early in the novel. When Nell first encounters Master Humphrey, it turns out that she has lost her way home from a visit to Quilp, with whom she has been treating on behalf of her grandfather for a new advance of money. Matthew Rowlinson notes that "Dickens implies that the old man's relations with Quilp are always mediated by Nell, though he nowhere directly explains why this should be so. We can only assume that the old man uses Nell as a lure to induce Quilp to loan him money" (369). It thus seems evident that Quilp makes no attempt to hide his lust for Nell even from her grandfather; nor does he even want to give Nell any illusions regarding his intentions towards her:

> "There's no hurry, little Nell, no hurry at all," said Quilp. "How should you like to be my number two, Nelly?"
>
> "To be what, sir?"
>
> "My number two, Nelly, my second, my Mrs Quilp," said the dwarf.
>
> The child looked frightened, but seemed not to understand him, which Mr Quilp observing, hastened to make his meaning more distinctly.
>
> "To be Mrs Quilp the second, when Mrs Quilp the first is dead, sweet Nell," said Quilp, wrinkling up his eyes and luring her towards him with his bent forefinger, "to be my wife, my little cherry-cheeked, red-lipped wife. Say that Mrs Quilp lives five year, or only four, you'll be just the proper age for me. Ha ha! Be a good girl, Nelly, a very good girl, and see if one of these days you don't come to be Mrs Quilp of Tower Hill."
>
> So far from being sustained and stimulated by this delightful prospect, the child shrank from him in great agitation, and trembled violently. Mr Quilp, either because frightening anybody afforded him a constitutional delight, or because it was pleasant to contemplate the death of Mrs Quilp number one, and the elevation of Mrs Quilp number two to her post and title, or because he was determined from purposes of his own to be agreeable and good-humoured at that particular time, only laughed and feigned to take no heed of her alarm. (*The Old Curiosity Shop*, Ch. 6, E-text p. 42)

It becomes evident from this exchange that Quilp's illicit obsession with Nell is indeed monstrous on a number of levels. First of all, by repeatedly referring to Nell as "the child," Dickens emphasizes the paedophilic nature of Quilp's stated wish that she become "Mrs Quilp the second, when Mrs Quilp the first is dead." Not only is Quilp's desire for Nell paedophilic; it is also sadistic. Seeing how distressed and frightened Nell is by his lurid suggestions, Quilp "only laughed and feigned to take no heed of her alarm." Remaining true to the form of the Evil/Demonic Cripple as outlined by Kriegel, Quilp takes a vengeful pleasure and pride in causing discomfort and even fear to the "normal" Little Nell.

From this point on, Nell is so consumed by her dread of Quilp that she is kept perpetually in motion by her fear of him. As Rowlinson observes:

> When [Nell] and her grandfather come under the relatively benign protection of Mrs. Jarley, the wax-work proprietress, Nell catches a glimpse of Quilp under an archway at the end of town, and her renascent sense of security is demolished. She feels "as if she were hemmed in by a legion of Quilps, and the very air itself were filled with them," and she can "get none but broken sleep by fits and starts all night, for fear of Quilp, who throughout her uneasy dreams was somehow connected with the wax-work, or was wax-work himself, or was Mrs. Jarley and wax-work too, or was himself, Mrs. Jarley, wax-work, and a barrel organ all in one, and yet not exactly any one of them either" (*OCS* 278-79). Her air, her dreams, her new curiosity shop have all been tainted by the threat of Quilp. He has become – and remains – a "perpetual nightmare" haunting her world (*OCS* 288). (Rowlinson, 303)

Clearly, Quilp is something of a super-evil-crip in terms of his tremendous and sustained ability to terrorize Nell psychologically. For Nell, the sexual and physical threat that Quilp poses–a potential threat though it may yet be–is nonetheless a *real* one; Quilp consequently becomes the driving force behind

virtually all of her actions and even dominates her dreams. It is interesting to note, however, that, for all his ability to torment Nell psychologically, the actual physical threat that he poses to her remains in essence theoretical and ultimately impotent. Still, just as Nell's thoughts and actions are consistently dominated by her fear of Quilp, Quilp himself remains totally consumed by his passion for Nell, even though he spends most of the novel physically separated from her. Thus driven by his obsession with Nell, he recruits Dick Swiveller as a surrogate in his scheme to despoil Nell's virtue. He also initiates a conspiracy to ruin the reputation of Kit, as Rowlinson points out, "not merely because Kit has faced him down and insulted him but also because he is Nell's former servant, whose honour is pledged to her protection. Kit's unassailable virtuousness even makes him something of a moral surrogate for the absent Nell, which goes some distance toward accounting for the particular intensity of Quilp's enmity toward him" (303).

Nevertheless, for all Quilp's zealousness in devising and undertaking schemes to corrupt the virtuous Nell, not one of his schemes comes to have any direct effect on Nell after she leaves London in Chapter 12. Despite all the ostensible potency of his unholy quest for vengeance as an Evil/Demonic Cripple, his maleficent machinations against Nell invariably prove ineffectual and impotent. All of Quilp's schemes are ultimately brought to an end by his own death, a death which proves to be almost as anti-climactic as his schemes. Shortly after his criminal plot against Kit is revealed, Quilp simply falls into a river and drowns. Lasting only two short paragraphs, Quilp's death-scene effectually

strips him of any lingering remnant of his formerly characteristic villainous vitality as an Evil/Demonic Cripple; virtually without even a hint of struggle, his body is gradually absorbed into a swamp of "slimy piles," "mud" and "long rank grass" (*The Old Curiosity Shop*, Ch. 67, E-text p. 493). His miry grave becomes a fittingly metonymic site of an ultimate, eternal union of a deformed body with a defiled mind.

The Plucky/Persevering Survivor Crip

The third type of crip character commonly found throughout literature in general, as well as in many of Dickens novels, is what I would like to call the Plucky/Persevering Crip. Unlike the Pathetic/Charity Cripple, the Plucky/Persevering Crip is endowed with a capacity for volition; she *acts*, rather than constantly being *acted upon*. And, unlike the Evil/Demonic Cripple, her actions are ameliorative and affirming rather than destructive and corrupting. The Plucky/Persevering Crip is thus essentially analogous to what Kriegel defines as the "Survivor Cripple":

> The Survivor Cripple is not demonic and he is not the object of charity. At the same time, he assumes that his wound gives him certain prerogatives, has set hm apart, has denied him "ordinariness." His endurance is attractive, both to himself and to the audience, for it is constructed around his understanding of the limitations it has imposed on him. (10)

The three Dickensian crip characters who, it seems to me, most clearly and memorably function as Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Cripples are Jenny Wren,

the dwarf dolls-dressmaker in *Our Mutual Friend*, Miss Mowcher, the morally-ambiguous chiropodist in *David Copperfield*, and the Marchioness, the Cinderellaesque kitchen-maid in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Despite their obvious differences in physical circumstances and social status, this trio of Dickensian dwarves, while accepting the limitations and isolation imposed on them as a result of their disability, clearly and consistently take a proactive stance towards their disability in that they actively seek to use their position as disabled Others as the potential centre for an alternative community of care and acceptance.

The character of Jenny Wren in *Our Mutual Friend* may, at first glance, seem to be just as much defined by her disability as are the pitiful Tiny Tim and the evil Daniel Quilp. Indeed, in her first textual appearance, Jenny herself announces three times that her "back is bad ... and legs are queer" (*OMF*, 271). While it may initially seem disturbing that Jenny herself seems to be so totally preoccupied with her disability that she feels the need to immediately draw it to the attention of everyone she meets, Jenny's attitude towards her disability is soon shown to be very different from that of Dickens' other, more stereotypical crips. The difference between Jenny and these other Dickensian crips is that she herself "articulates" the fragmented and misshapen pieces of her character and synthesizes them in order to produce a construction of herself as "the person of the house" (*OMF*, 271). Jenny's stance towards her disability is proactive; she understands and accepts the fact that her body is fragmented and, therefore, that her access to discourse and textuality is limited. She also senses that this condition has something to do with female desire and with the "he" that will not

make her whole again. Like Bertha Plummer, Jenny Wren is virtually excluded from the social/sexual economy of the community. Just as Bertha's infatuation with Tackleton demonstrates her deep-seated desire to somehow minimize the significance of her disability and resulting difference in hopes of gaining access to the social/sexual economy that is at the heart of what Kriegel would call the 'community of *normals*,' Jenny's fantasies about the "he" who will come to court her reveal both a clear sexual self-awareness and a consequent desire to become a participant in the social/sexual economy. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, while Bertha's infatuation with Tackleton is the result of her physical as well as emotional blindness, the desire that Jenny articulates is based on a realistic view of herself and her disability, a view that distinguishes the experience of love from the experience of healing.

Another thing that distinguishes Jenny Wren as being a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip as opposed to a Pathetic/Charity Cripple is her capacity to articulate for herself dual roles; she is both crip and nurse, saint and sadist. As Miriam Bailin argues:

> Despite Dickens's urgent calls for sympathy on behalf of the "poor, poor little doll's dressmaker" (ii, 2), Jenny, with her luxuriant, golden hair and deformed body, seems a grotesque icon of the morality which insists upon a stark polarization of social and libidinal selves, which refuses, as Karen Chase says of Dickens in particular, "to countenance mixed moral and psychological conditions."[12] Jenny is either sadistic or "all softened compassion" (iv, 10), debased or exalted, the nurse who sprinkles pepper on the plasters she applies to the reprehensible Fledgeby's wounds and who

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[12]Chase *Eros and Psyche*, 131. [Bailin's note]

> delights in his pain, and the nurse who saves Eugene through the application of a healing word. (101)

In fact, it seems to me that Dickens' construction of Jenny as a Plucky/Persevering Survivor Crip is a construction which mitigates against the conventional notion of disability as always being an external signifier of either internal fortitude or internal corruption. Jenny's disability makes her neither as entirely saintly as Tiny Tim nor as wholly evil as Daniel Quilp. Instead, what Jenny's disability *does* make her is a complex hybrid of emotional infirmities and strengths. But although the complexities of Jenny's character could potentially establish her *humanity* as superseding her disability, they are instead used by Dickens to reinforce her Otherness as a crip.

Even so, Jenny's disability, while remaining the dominant feature of her character, cannot be said to be presented by Dickens as the sum total of her identity. Indeed, Jenny does not use her disability as a shield to cover up her true identity, but rather as a medium for exploring and expressing it. For Jenny, pain and illness exist as pathways to self-knowledge, which in turn is always mediated and distorted by pain. She has visions of visitations from "long slanting rows of angels" who keep repeating the question, "Who is this in pain? Who is this in pain?" (290). Her reply, "Oh, my blessed children, it's poor me," is a conscious assertion of body, self, and pain, in a novel and a society where women are supposed to deny all three. Physical pain is not, for Jenny, a condition through which she must submissively pass, but the structuring idiom of her life. Jenny accepts and even embraces her disability and her pain, not with a view towards

using it to control and manipulate others, but rather so that she can fully explore and express her true identity.

Much of Jenny's capacity to develop an identity which incorporates, but is not totally defined by, her disability lies in the fact that she is able to forge and function within a number of profound and complex relationships. Jenny does not remain merely as she is introduced into the text, "a child--a dwarf--a something" (271); instead she goes on to assume the fully human and adult responsibilities of looking after a drunken father and acting as a devoted friend, and even fairy-godmother, to Lizzie. It is perhaps her friendship with Lizzie, despite its tendency to embrace fantasy, that transforms Jenny from a stereotypical crip into a fully human character. In the scene in which Jenny gets Lizzie to admit her love for Eugene, Jenny, in keeping with her penchant for `articulating`, plays with the idea of body parts. As she prepares to ask Lizzie about her feelings for Eugene, Jenny encourages Lizzie to figuratively let down her hair by literally letting down her hair. As Helena Michie argues, this scene effectively reinforces the construction of Jenny as articulator:

> Jenny's "nimble hands" create a situation as easily as they create dolls. Her material is Lizzie's body and its desires; by folding and arranging, Jenny, like Venus, "articulates" hidden parts. Long and loosened hair, traditionally a Victorian synecdoche for female desire, becomes, in this instance, both sexuality and its veil, both articulation and disguise. Jenny can read the language of Lizzie's body as she cannot (yet) read books; in reading both pain and desire in Lizzie, she begins to construct a self, a "lady," a "wife," for her at their intersection. Jenny's prayer at the end of the scene, that her own angels come to Lizzie because "she wants help more than I," demonstrates Jenny's ability to imagine a self for Lizzie even when Lizzie cannot. Lizzie's linguistic access

> to her own pain and her own desire are muted and hesitant; through the idiom of Jenny's fantasy, they enter the novel and begin to assert themselves. (211)

Dickens thus effectively uses Jenny's relationship with Lizzie as a medium through which Jenny can be transformed from one who is objectified and defined by her disability into one who is able to incorporate her disability into a self-constructed identity through which she is, in turn, able to construct an identity for Lizzie. As a Plucky/Persevering Crip, Jenny exhibits a unique kind of emotional fortitude which enables her to draw heavily on her own experiences of real pain and fancied desire in constructing an identity for Lizzie. Jenny's identity as articulator thus allows her to fulfil her role as a Plucky/Persevering Crip.

Of great significance is the fact that, as I have already noted, Jenny has her own sexual desires, desires which, unlike Lizzie, she is able to articulate herself. As we will see in Trollope's portrayal of the licentious Madeline Neroni, Dickens can allow Jenny to articulate sexual desire precisely because she is a crip, and because she does not function traditionally as heroine. By making Jenny a child as well as a crip, Dickens creates in her a safe space for the articulation of female sexuality. Jenny can, therefore, indulge in fantasies about the "he" who will come to court her, while Lizzie must deny Eugene's erotic attraction. Yet, despite this objectification of Jenny as crip and child, the strong implication that Jenny will ultimately marry Mr. Sloppy ostensibly places the final emphasis on Jenny's potential for becoming a full participant in adult society precisely *because* she is a Plucky/Persevering Crip. The implicit pairing of the acerbically witty Jenny Wren with the intellectually impaired Sloppy, however,

raises some legitimate questions as to whether her status as a Plucky/Persevering Crip truly frees her from the stigma of disability, or merely reinscribes this stigma in a different form.

The same psychological complexity and ultimate emotional fortitude coupled with an element of moral ambiguity that characterize Jenny Wren are also at the heart of Dickens' portrayal of the dwarf itinerant beautician, Miss Mowcher, in *David Copperfield*. Indeed, David's description of his first encounter with Miss Mowcher resonates with both admiration of her vivacity and a keen awareness of her Other-ness:

> I looked at the doorway and saw nothing. I was still looking at the doorway, thinking that Miss Mowcher was a long while making her appearance, when, to my infinite astonishment, there came waddling round a sofa which stood between me and it, a pursy dwarf, of about forty or forty-five, with a very large head and face, a pair of roguish grey eyes, and such extremely little arms, that, to enable herself to lay a finger archly against her snub nose, as she ogled Steerforth, she was obliged to meet the finger half-way, and lay her nose against it. Her chin, which was what is called a double chin, was so fat that it entirely swallowed up the strings of her bonnet, bow and all. Throat she had none; waist she had none; legs she had none, worth mentioning; for though she was more than full-sized down to where her waist would have been, if she had had any, and though she terminated, as human beings generally do, in a pair of feet, she was so short that she stood at a common-sized chair as at a table, resting a bag she carried on the seat. This lady - dressed in an off-hand, easy style; bringing her nose and her forefinger together, with the difficulty I have described; standing with her head necessarily on one side, and, with one of her sharp eyes shut up, making an uncommonly knowing face - after ogling Steerforth for a few moments, broke into a torrent of words. (*David Copperfield*, Ch. 22,
> E-text pp. 653-654)

It is Miss Mowcher's dwarfism that becomes the focal point of David Copperfield's description. More specifically, this description focuses on the various *'normal'* physical characteristics that Miss Mowcher *lacks* because she is a dwarf. For example, the narrator notes that she had neither throat, nor waist, nor legs–at least her legs were evidently so insubstantial as not to be worth mentioning. Such a catalogue of Miss Mowcher's physical differences and deficiencies in comparison with the *'normal'* population serves to reinforce the fact of her physical Otherness, as well as to alert the reader to the probability that she is also an emotional Other in terms of her brashness and apparent lack of respect for what are generally considered to be *'normal'* standards of decency and propriety–as evidenced by her "roguish grey eyes."

Dickens' initial emphasis on Miss Mowcher's physical Otherness and the emotional deviance that it implies is apparently deliberately intended as a foundation for her future role in assisting Steerforth to seduce Little Em'ly. Biographical scholarship on Dickens has shown that the fact that Miss Mowcher is transformed from a potentially Evil/Demonic Cripple into a Plucky/Persevering Crip is due to the reaction of the actual woman on whom Dickens based the character:

> Miss Mowcher is based upon Mrs. Seymour Hill, a dwarf who worked as a chiropodist, and was well-known to Dickens. She was introduced in the December 1849 number of [*David Copperfield*], and on the 18th December [Mrs. Hill] wrote to Dickens:
>
> > If you had attacked me in the full time of health, wealth and happiness I think perhaps I could have borne it with patience ... [You] show up personal deformities with insinuations that the

> purest of my sex may be construed to the worst of purposes. All know you have drawn my portrait – I admit it but the vulgar slang of language I *deny* ... I have suffered long and much for my personal deformities but never before at the hands of a Man so highly gifted as Charles Dickens and hitherto considered a Christian and Friend to his Fellow Creatures.

What she seems to have objected to principally, apart from being in the public eye, was the "insinuation" contained in Ch. XXII that she would be part of Steerforth's attempt to seduce Little Em'ly. Dickens wrote her back the same morning:

> I am bound to admit that in the character to which I take it for granted you refer [i.e. Miss Mowcher], I have yielded to several little recollections of your general manner but I assure you that the original of a great portion of that character is well known to me and to several friends of mine and is wholly removed from you and a very different person ... [R]ather than you should pass another of those sleepless nights of which you write to me or go another morning tearfully to your daily work, I would alter the whole design of the character and remove it, in its progress, from the possibility of that bad construction at which you hint. (Ranson, 13)

True to his word, Dickens sees to it that, by the time David Copperfield next encounters Miss Mowcher some ten chapters later in Chapter 32, the moral ambiguity that had previously been associated with her disability and consequent Otherness is replaced by a sober reflectiveness and bold honesty that are as much the result of her Otherness as were her earlier brashness and irreverence:

> "Come!" said she, accepting the offer of my hand to help her over the fender, and looking wistfully up into my face, "you know you wouldn't mistrust me, if I was a full-sized woman!"
>
> I felt that there was much truth in this; and I felt rather ashamed of myself.

> "You are a young man," she said, nodding. "Take a word of advice, even from three foot nothing. Try not to associate bodily defects with mental, my good friend, except for a solid reason." (*David Copperfield*, Ch. 32, E-text p. 925)

David, by his own account, immediately takes the dwarf's didacticism to heart: "I gave Miss Mowcher my hand, with a very different opinion of her from that which I had hitherto entertained" (*David Copperfield*, Ch. 32, E-text p. 927), and the reader is, of course, intended to follow his lead. But, as if not wanting to allow any room at all for further doubt about Miss Mowcher's integrity, Dickens makes her the agent by which Littimer, Steerforth's former servant, is arrested. The story of her plucky heroics is recounted to David by a warden:

> "Twenty Eight," returned my informant, speaking throughout in a low tone, and looking over his shoulder as we walked along the passage, to guard himself from being overheard, in such an unlawful reference to these Immaculates, by Creakle and the rest; "Twenty Eight (also transportation) got a place, and robbed a young master of a matter of two hundred and fifty pounds in money and valuables, the night before they were going abroad. I particularly recollect his case, from his being took by a dwarf."
>
> "A what?"
>
> "A little woman. I have forgot her name?"
>
> "Not Mowcher?"
>
> "That's it! He had eluded pursuit, and was going to America in a flaxen wig, and whiskers, and such a complete disguise as never you see in all your born days; when the little woman, being in Southampton, met him walking along the street - picked him out with her sharp eye in a moment - ran betwixt his legs to upset him - and held on to him like grim Death."
>
> "Excellent Miss Mowcher!" cried I.
>
> "You'd have said so, if you had seen her, standing on a chair in the witness-box at the trial, as I did," said my friend. "He cut her face right open, and pounded her in the most brutal manner, when she took him; but she never

> loosed her hold till he was locked up. She held so tight to him, in fact, that the officers were obliged to take 'em both together. She gave her evidence in the gamest way, and was highly complimented by the Bench, and cheered right home to her lodgings. She said in Court that she'd have took him single-handed (on account of what she knew concerning him), if he had been Samson. And it's my belief she would!"
>
> It was mine too, and I highly respected Miss Mowcher for it. (*David Copperfield*, Ch. 61, E-text pp. 1710-1711)

Ultimately then, Miss Mowcher does indeed emerge as the epitome of the Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip. Through her own heroic efforts to apprehend Littimer, she herself becomes a compelling validation of her admonition to David "not to associate bodily defects with mental." By having Miss Mowcher articulate this caution concerning false equations between bodily and mental defects, Dickens essentially refutes any notion his readers might have that a deformed body must automatically be considered the corporeal manifestation of a corrupted soul. Dickens' 'rehabilitation' of Miss Mowcher from a potentially Evil/Demonic Cripple to a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip can therefore be seen as part of a broader nineteenth-century refutation of the lingering eighteenth-century humoral theory which posits a necessary and direct correlation between body and mind.

Whereas Miss Mowcher must, in some sense, be 'rehabilitated' into the role of Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip, Sophronia Sphynx, aka the Marchioness, in *The Old Curiosity Shop* seems to have been created expressly to fill this role. Kept as a virtual prisoner in a cage-like kitchen, this poor young dwarf servant must rely on her wits to survive, and eventually, succeed in

achieving a happy ending for her story. Like Little Nell, the Marchioness is small, overworked, and left to her own devices without any kind of parental protection. However, unlike the timid and innocent Nell who cannot cope with London's competitiveness and corruption, the resilient and street-wise Marchioness resourcefully and strategically adapts to whatever situation she presently finds herself. For example, when challenged to gamble, the Marchioness becomes an avid student of both human nature and the art of winning sixpence. Dickens' construction of the Marchioness as a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip is thus, to a large extent, centred upon her seemingly innate sagacity and ingenuity. As immediate and stymying as are the physical and social obstacles she must contend with, these obstacles serve as loci where her pluck and perseverance can be demonstrated all the more clearly and powerfully. The Marchioness is thus raised to a status analogous to that of a fairy-tale heroine. However, as Ella Westland argues, this by no means makes Dickens' portrayal of the Marchioness simplistic or stereotypical:

> The Marchioness looks at first less like a resourceful heroine than a passive Cinderella awaiting a fairy godmother. She is relegated to the kitchen by her wicked stepmother (or locked in a dungeon by a she-dragon), with Dick playing the role of Buttons, and risking his employers' wrath to entertain her. But as the fairytale plot thickens, her role changes (to use Propp's terms) from "victim" to "seeker-hero"; she defies her captors, outwits them with her magical key, and flies after Dick to save him. In a marvellous parody of the sleeping princess being awakened by her prince, Dick is roused from his delirium to find the Marchioness in his bachelor rooms. He persists in believing that he has woken up in an enchanted palace in the presence of the Princess of China: 'Arabian Nights, certainly,' thought Mr Swiveller; 'they always clap their hands instead of ringing the bell. Now for

> the two thousand black slaves, with jars of jewels on their heads!'" [*The Old Curiosity Shop*, Ch. 64, E-text p. 459]. But it turns out that Dick's princess is the kitchen urchin herself, who is transformed over the years into a lovely young woman. From being a nameless child she wins a plethora of names: Marchioness, Sophronia Sphynx, Sophronia Swiveller. She marries her middle-class prince and takes a huge step up in the social hierarchy, symbolized by the courtesy title of Marchioness that her husband has bestowed on her. (Westland, 71)

The issue Westland raises regarding names and identity is really a central element in Dickens' construction of the Marchioness as a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip. Described by the narrator as "sharp-witted and cunning" (Ch. 57, E-text p. 412), the Marchioness's ability to function as a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip is, to a large extent, contingent upon her ability to adapt to her present circumstances and to find a way to use those circumstances, however dire or difficult they may be, to her advantage. Like Jenny Wren, the Marchioness must learn to *articulate* the various fragments of her identity as abandoned child, oppressed servant, and sagacious, if struggling, crip into a single new cohesive identity as young woman and, eventually, contentedly middle-class wife. It is somewhat ironic that it is precisely the Marchioness's greatest physical disadvantage, namely her disability, which ultimately serves as the cohesive agent that binds all the disparate fragments of her identity into a definitive construction of her as a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip.

The Marchioness's disability and her consequent capacity to use it to rehabilitate and reconstruct her own identity also play a crucial role in breaking

down the barriers which would otherwise have severely limited her ability to connect with someone like Dick Swiveller in any kind of meaningful way. As Miriam Bailin observes:

> The dreadful shadow of violation hovering about Nell as she makes her sad journey, invoked perhaps most graphically by Quilp's occupancy of her bed, ... is exorcised by proxy through the innocent cohabitation of Dick and the Marchioness, his little orphan nurse, during the weeks of Dick's illness ... Dick's status as Quilp's "adopted son" and the Marchioness's hinted identity as the illegitimate offspring of Quilp and Sally Brass[13] make their healing relations as patient and nurse more than just a contrast to the illicit lusts of their progenitors, but an apparent transformation of the world they are heir to. (Bailin, 92-93).

There is of course an unmistakable paradox inherent in the construction of the Marchioness as Dick's "little orphan nurse," for it clearly inverts the conventional notion of the helpless little crip heroine being in perpetual need of care and protection from the big, strong, TAB hero. Furthermore, it is important to remember that to construct the Marchioness as Dick's "nurse" is also to introduce the potential of undermining her status as a crip, insofar as the roles of Nurse and Crip would ostensibly seem to be mutually exclusive. However, Dickens does manage to succeed in reconciling these two disparate fragments of the Marchioness's identity by bringing them together as distinct but subordinate elements of her fundamental identity as a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip.

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[13]Discussions of the probable identity of the Marchioness can be found in *The Dickensian* 36 (1940): 205-208; *Modern Language Notes,* 68 (1953): 162-165; and *Modern Language Review* 65 (1970): 517-518. [Bailn's note]

Perhaps the ultimate evidence of the Marchioness's efficacy as a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip is the fact that she ends up marrying her would-be hero, Dick Swiveller. In this instance, the Marchioness outdoes even Jenny Wren, whose marriage to Sloppy–while a clearly-established probability–remains unactualized and unconsummated at the close of the novel. Marriage to Dick Swiveller, and with it, full access to all the rights and privileges of *'normal'* middle-class adult life is both the result of and the reward for the Marchioness's consistency in being a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip. In a novel where all the virtuous characters do not necessarily *live*, let alone live happily ever after, the Marchioness's perseverance and sagacity as a dwarf facing a world of giant obstacles procures her the earthly happy ending that eludes the shrinking and timid Little Nell.

Conclusion

While all of the Dickensian crip characters that I have discussed in this chapter can be identified as either a Pathetic/Charity Cripple, an Evil/Demonic Cripple, or a Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip, it is important to keep in mind that the ability to categorize these characters in this manner does not mean that these characters are uniform in personality or purpose. Indeed, although Dickens tends to view illness and disability as either directly caused by or a more general metaphor for the widespread diseases of social inequality and injustice, the psycho-social complexity and/or allegorical significance with which he endows even a crip as saintly as Tiny Tim and a crip as wholly evil as Daniel Quilp

demonstrates his great skill in using individual, fragmented, ill and disabled bodies to expose the infirmities of the profit-driven industrialized Victorian society, as well as to articulate the potential efficacy of practising social virtues such as empathy and charity. Dickens' crip characters thus become microcosmic embodiments of the Victorian Social Body with all its ailments and infirmities.

Chapter Six
"Crip Power": Proactive Invalidism in Anthony Trollope's *The Belton Estate* and *Barchester Towers*

Introduction: Monsters, Supercrips and The Proactive Victorian Invalid

Just as the concepts of 'crips' and 'cripness' provide a crucial overarching framework for the examination of constructions of illness and disability in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the notion of invalidism functions as a general, yet period-specific, gloss for reading ill and disabled bodies in the Victorian era. Diane Price Herndl observes that, "Defining invalidism is a function of history. We usually reserve the term 'invalid' for someone who is bedridden, but in the nineteenth century it meant a state of weakness or predisposition to illness. Invalidism therefore referred to a lack of power as well as a tendency towards illness" (1). Miriam Bailin, on the other hand, argues against such a conventional definition of invalidism; she instead posits a more proactive definition of invalidism, contending that invalidism offered a legitimized "relaxation of the rigidly conceived behavioral codes which governed both work and play," thus contributing to "a strong social sanction for invalidism in Victorian England" (12). It seems to me that, although it is crucially important not to lose sight of the corporeal realities of 'invalids' and 'invalidism' as articulated by literary/social critics like Herndl, it is equally vital to consider the notion of

invalidism as a potential space for the 'rehabilitation' of illness and disability in the nineteenth century.

The Victorian notion of proactive invalidism, as it has been most recently and extensively articulated and explored by Bailin, can, I believe, be directly linked back to the eighteenth-century construction of the Supercrip. Like the eighteenth-century Supercrip, the Victorian invalid strategically uses the status of Other that is automatically conferred on her as a result of her illness/disability in order to free herself from the rigid social codes of behaviour which dictate the actions and interactions of the rest of the population. Thus liberated from the rigid restrictions of conventional Victorian codes of conduct, the illness/disability and consequent Otherness of the proactive Victorian invalid enables her to disregard 'normal' social expectations in pursuing her own best interests and/or what she considers to be the best interests of others. Significantly however, although enabled by her Otherness to disregard 'normal' social expectations, the Victorian invalid by no means remains exempt from the pronouncements of moral judgements of those around her. In fact, while socially-transgressive acts deemed altruistic by the `normal` majority generally cause the proactive Victorian invalid to be viewed as a Supercrip, socially-transgressive acts deemed by the `normal` majority to be self-centered or corrupt are just as likely to cause the proactive Victorian invalid to be constructed as a Monster, in much the same way as were her Augustan predecessors. Therefore, although it is originally and predominantly an eighteenth-century construct, the Monster/Supercrip binary continues to remain a common and integral element in the Victorian construction

of the proactive invalid. This is a fact most clearly and effectively demonstrated by Anthony Trollope in his portrayal of the virtuous Supercrip/invalid Mary Belton in *The Belton Estate* (1865), and the physically deformed yet monstrously licentious Madeline Neroni in *Barchester Towers* (1857). Although Trollope's prolificness as an author rivals that of Dickens (Trollope wrote nearly fifty novels in the course of his career), it is only in these two novels that he ventures any kind of sustained and in-depth view of ill and disabled characters who personify positive and negative constructions of the proactive Victorian invalid. The work of this chapter will therefore be to explore the ways in which Trollope uses the originally and predominantly eighteenth-century construct of the Monster/Supercrip binary to articulate essentially enabling portrayals of Mary Belton and Madeline Neroni as fully individuated, proactive Victorian invalids.

The Continuing Adventures of Mary Belton, Supercrip

Mary Belton, the invalid sister of hero Will Belton in Trollope's 1865 novel, *The Belton Estate*, can, in many ways, be seen as a multi-faceted prototype of the proactive Victorian invalid. Incredibly, the character has received virtually no substantial critical attention in the last one hundred and thirty-seven years. This may be, at least in part, due to a historically-predominant view of Mary Belton as being little more than a blandly saint-like Supercrip. Although a superficial reading of the novel may easily lend itself to this kind of stereotypical construction of Mary Belton as Supercrip, a more attentive reading reveals the

true complexity of her character and thus the true erroneousness of any attempt to define her simply as a stereotypical Supercrip. When Will Belton first mentions his sister, the narrator tells us that Clara recalls her as being "a poor sickly creature, with a twisted spine and a hump back, as to whose welfare she ought to have made inquiries" (34). The fact that the mention of Mary's name evokes almost a knee-jerk impulse towards sympathy in Clara would appear to be a clear indication of Trollope's intention to portray Mary as a kind of pathetic Charity Cripple. In fact, Will's subsequent description of his invalid sister seems to solicit pity for the *poor invalid*:

> She'll never be better. But then she does not become much worse. I think she does grow a little weaker. She's older than I am, you know two years older; but you would think she was quite an old woman to look at her. (34)

Admittedly, the exact nature of Mary's ailment remains unclear: "She'll never be better. But then she does not become much worse ... she does grow a little weaker." What *is* clear, however, is that Will does, in some respects at least, feel sorry for his sister and expects that Clara should feel sorry for her as well. Again, it would seem as though Trollope is setting up a portrayal of Mary as a suffering Charity Cripple rather than as a proactive Supercrip. In fact, at one point later in this same scene, Will echoes Bob Cratchit when he declares the persevering character of his suffering sister to be "as good as gold" (34). Yet, what appears to be a carefully constructed foundation for the portrayal of Mary as Charity Cripple is at once staunchly reinforced and startlingly shattered by Mary's actual physical presence. When Mary is physically introduced into the main action of the novel,

the narrator invokes the two seminal stereotypes of Monster and Supercrip as the social and literary context for his depiction of her character:

> ... She was, indeed, a poor cripple, unable to walk beyond the limits of her own garden, feeble in health, dwarfed in stature, robbed of all the ordinary enjoyments of life by physical deficiencies, which made even the task of living a burden to her. To eat was a pain, or at least a trouble. Sleep would not comfort her in bed, and weariness during the day made it necessary that the hours passed in bed should be very long. She was one of those whose lot in life drives us to marvel at the inequalities of human destiny, and to inquire curiously within ourselves whether future compensation is to be given. (142)

Significantly, Trollope takes on board *both* the Monster and Supercrip stereotypes in staking out Mary's identity as an invalid. He directly engages the Monster stereotype as a means of highlighting Mary's Supercrip qualities; he points out that "It is said of those who are small and crooked-backed in their bodies, that their minds are equally cross-grained, and their tempers as ungainly as their stature," but then quickly goes on to assure the reader that "no one had ever said this of Mary Belton ... those who knew her well, loved her as they knew her; and there were three or four persons in the world who were ready at all times to swear that she was faultless" (142). As was the case with Pope, Mary Belton's status as Supercrip is inextricably linked to her capacity to inspire admiration and loyalty among her circle of acquaintances. And, as was also the case with Pope, the other major aspect of Mary Belton's identity as Supercrip is the severity of her physical suffering, and the level of sympathy that she consequently elicits from others. At the very outset of this physical introduction of

Mary Belton, the narrator assures us of both the severity and pathos of her *affliction*. The rather exhaustive and impressive list of her ailments, ranging from mobility impairment to eating and sleep disorders, irrefutably establishes Mary's status as suffering Supercrip in that it highlights the constant battle that she must valiantly wage against her own body, while still maintaining her dignity and vitality of character.

However, as I have already indicated, Mary Belton cannot be reduced to merely a one-dimensional, suffering Supercrip. This is because Trollope endows Mary with an energy and tenacious spirit that makes her, not merely a passive spectator, but a proactive force in the action of the novel. She is, for example, the primary source of insight and advice for her brother Will:

> Will Belton's love for his sister amounted almost to veneration; and his devotion to her was so great, that in all the affairs of his life he was prepared to make her comfort one of his first considerations. And she, knowing this, had come to fear that she might be an embargo on his prosperity, and a stumbling-block in the way of his success. It had occurred to her that he would have married earlier in life if she had not been, as it were, in his way; and she threatened him playfully,–for she could be playful,–that she would leave him if he did not soon bring a mistress home to Plaistow Hall. "I will go to uncle Robert," she had said. Now, uncle Robert was the clergyman in Lincolnshire of whom mention has been made, and he was among those two or three who believed in Mary Belton with an implicit faith,–as was also his wife. "I will go to uncle Robert, Will, and then you will be driven to get a wife." (143)

In this paragraph, we see Mary being raised to the level of quasi-deity in the eyes of her family by virtue of her status as Supercrip. She inspires the "veneration" and "devotion" of her brother, as well as the "implicit faith" of her uncle and aunt.

But the truly remarkable thing about the kind of deification that Mary undergoes is that it does not render her merely a passive object of idolization, but rather an active and powerful influence on the lives of those around her. It is said of her brother Will that "in all the affairs of his life he was prepared to make her comfort one of his first considerations." This indeed places Mary in a unique position of power and influence in Will's life. It is, therefore, to Trollope's credit that Mary is consistently portrayed as strategically using her influence over Will for what she believes to be his best interests. Witness the following exchange between Mary and Will about Will's attachment to Clara:

> "Girls, I believe, think sometimes that men are indifferent in their love. They suppose that a man can forget at once when he is not accepted, and that things can go on just as before."
>
> "I suppose she thinks so of me," said Belton woefully.
>
> "She must either think that, or else be willing to give herself the chance of learning to like you better."
>
> "There's nothing of that, I'm sure. She's true as steel." ...
>
> "But she would be heartless if she were to encourage you to be with her simply for the assistance you may give her, knowing at the same time that you could not be happy in her presence."
>
> "She is not heartless."
>
> "Then she must suppose that you are."
>
> "I dare say she doesn't think that I care much about it. When I told her, I did it all of a heap, you see; and I fancy she thought I was just mad at the time."
>
> "And did you speak about it again?"
>
> "No ; not a word. I shouldn't wonder if she hadn't forgotten it before I went away."
>
> "That would be impossible." (149)

Mary actively uses her position of influence over her brother in order to counsel him regarding his relationship with Clara. Despite the fact that her disability

afforded her "little ... opportunity of learning the ways of men and women from experience in society, she had always seemed to him to know exactly what every one should do in every position of life" (144). In this respect, she is indeed a Supercrip. Nevertheless, the interesting and important fact remains that Mary does not limit herself in her conversation with Will to making platitudinous pronouncements based on her quasi-omniscient status as a Supercrip; rather, she makes comments and asks questions that are astutely designed to draw out Will's true feelings about Clara. Thus, Mary purposefully exercises her position as Supercrip in order to help her brother sort through his own feelings.

Just as Mary uses her position as Supercrip to help educate Will about his true state of mind and heart towards Clara, she also uses the role of Supercrip to gain Clara's admiration, and, with it, to gain the ability to facilitate the happy reunion between Clara and Will. Mary begins this process by teaching Clara that her disability does not detract from her humanity. This lesson actually comes as something of a crash course for Clara. After painstakingly preparing for the arrival of an "invalid lady," the narrator tells us that "Clara was agreeably surprised, and felt herself to be suddenly relieved of an unpleasant weight. She could talk to the woman she saw there, as to any other woman, without the painful necessity of treating her always as an invalid" (357). This distinction between Mary's status as an invalid and her identity as an amiable woman is highly significant in that it highlights her *individual identity* as encompassing–but not dependent on–her disability. The notion of Mary's disability as informing but not defining her identity is reinforced in Clara's mind by Mrs. Askerton, who says

of Mary, ""I never saw a woman who got more strength out of her weakness. Who would dare to contradict her?" (359). With this comment, Mrs. Askerton confirms the general perception of Mary as a truly proactive invalid, who possesses the strength as well as the shrewdness to strategically use her own disability to exert a positive influence on the lives of others. It is Mary herself who ultimately proves the validity of both popular perception and Mrs. Askerton's declaration when she succeeds in bringing Will and Clara together through her efforts as mediator/advisor. In a manner that is reminiscent of Dickens' Jenny Wren, Mary shrewdly and effectively articulates her various physical frailties into a cohesive identity as a Supercrip, a proactive invalid whose debilities and consequent dependence on others put her in a position to inspire trust in others and, as a result, to exercise influence over them. Trollope's construction of Mary Belton as Supercrip can therefore be viewed as quite progressive and enlightened insofar as Mary is portrayed not merely as a saintly cripple who dispenses sage advice from her sickbed, but rather as an amiable, independent and strong-minded young woman who shrewdly uses her status as Supercrip to influence positively the lives of others.

Madeline Neroni as Monstrously Proactive Invalid

Although Madeline Neroni, the licentious crip temptress of Trollope's *Barchester Towers*, may, at first glance, appear to fit nicely and neatly into the position of monstrous foil for the Supercrip Mary Belton in the stereotypical Monster vs. Supercrip binary, the subtlety and complexity of character with which she is portrayed renders this kind of binary classification simply untenable. Trollope highlights Madeline's inherent ambiguity as he introduces her into the action of the novel:

> The second child had been christened Madeline, and had been a great beauty. We need not say had been, for she was never more beautiful than at any time of which we write, though her person for many years had been disfigured by an accident ...
>
> She had fallen, she said, in ascending a ruin, and had fatally injured the sinews of her knee; so fatally, that when she stood she lost eight inches of her accustomed height; so fatally, that when she essayed to move, she could only drag herself painfully along, with protruded hip and extended foot in a manner less graceful than that of a hunchback. She had consequently made up her mind, once and for ever, that she would never stand, and never attempt to move herself. (I, 74-75)

It is an interesting paradox that despite the fact that "her person for many years had been disfigured by an accident" and that "when she essayed to move, she could only drag herself painfully along, with protruded hip and extended foot in a manner less graceful than that of a hunchback," Madeline is presented as exceptionally physically attractive. Madeline herself is acutely aware of both her innate beauty and the potential for her deformity to detract from it. She thus

becomes–in her own mind as well as in the minds of those around her–a kind of Monstrous Supercrip. This paradox is worth considering in detail, for I believe it is at the heart of Trollope's conception and construction of Madeline as a proactive invalid. As Cindy LaCom has noted:

> [Madeline's] personhood, apparently constituted by her physical body, is deformed, but despite this (or because of it) she is beautiful. Her beauty, which is overtly sexual, represents itself as a "disfigured" body. Though Trollope may appear to challenge cultural norms by making Neroni sexual, he also condemns female sexuality by implying that it is inherently deformed. And by collapsing the boundaries between her "person" and her disfigurement, Trollope takes the first step toward making female sexuality a kind of dis-ease. (LaCom, 194)

LaCom points here to a crucial, if negative, element in the construction of Madeline as a proactive invalid, namely the fact that Trollope does draw an implicit link between Madeline's overt sexuality and the monstrousness of her deformity–both physical and moral. As the following paragraph from the novel indicates, there is a sense of monstrousness even in the fact that her overt sexuality remains ultimately impotent:

> As for the signora, ... in truth she cared no more for Mr. Slope than she did for twenty others who had been at her feet before him. She willingly, nay greedily, accepted his homage. He was the finest fly that Barchester had hitherto afforded to her web; and the signora was a powerful spider that made wondrous webs, and could in no way live without catching flies. Her taste in this respect was abominable, for she had no use for the victims when caught. She could not eat them matrimonially, as young lady-spiders do whose webs are mothers' weaving. Nor could she devour them by any escapade of a less legitimate description. Her unfortunate affliction precluded her from all hope of levanting with a lover. It would be impossible to run away with a lady who required three servants to move her from a sofa. (I, 270)

The image of Madeline as an incapacitated widow spider that "made wondrous webs, and could in no way live without catching flies," and yet "had no use for the victims when caught" is a very effective one in that it highlights both the monstrousness and the impotence of her flagrant sexuality. Through this image, Trollope memorably illustrates the fundamental conceptual link between Madeline's overt, yet ultimately ineffectual sexuality and the notion that, as a crip who transgressively exhibits her sexuality, she is a Monster. This image of Madeline as an incapacitated widow spider is, therefore, highly significant in that it encapsulates all the monstrous aspects of her character, and clearly establishes her as monstrous Other.

Madeline's monstrously overt, if ultimately impotent, sexuality results in her being marginalized by those who would declare themselves to be "decent" citizens of Barchester. Such a strategy of marginalization is clearly at work in the following discussion that Mrs. Proudie has with Lady De Courcy about Madeline:

> "But why does she lie on a sofa?" asked Lady De Courcy.
>
> "She has only one leg," replied Mrs. Proudie.
>
> "Only one leg!" said Lady De Courcy, who felt to a certain degree dissatisfied that the signora was thus incapacitated. "Was she born so?"
>
> "Oh, no," said Mrs. Proudie,--and her ladyship felt somewhat recomforted by the assurance,--"she had two. But that Signor Neroni beat her, I believe, till she was obliged to have one amputated. At any rate, she entirely lost the use of it."
>
> "Unfortunate creature!" said the countess, who herself knew something of matrimonial trials.
>
> "Yes," said Mrs. Proudie; "one would pity her, in spite of her past bad conduct, if she now knew how to behave herself. But she does not. She is the most insolent creature I ever put my eye on." (II, 112)

But Mrs. Proudie does not stop at labelling Madeline "insolent"; rather, she goes on to make an explicit connection between her physical disability and her moral corruption:

> "You don't know the intriguing villainy of that woman," said Mrs. Proudie, remembering her torn flounces.
> "But you say she has only got one leg?"
> "She is as full of mischief as tho' she had ten. Look at her eyes, Lady De Courcy. Did you ever see such eyes in a decent woman's head?"
> "Indeed I never did, Mrs. Proudie." (II, 113)

Lady De Courcy's curiosity about Madeline's disability, a curiosity that is fueled by her dissatisfaction with the fact that the exotic Signora Neroni is debilitated, provides Mrs. Proudie with the perfect opportunity to promulgate her own hostile interpretation of Madeline's deformity, namely that it is the outer mark of inner corruption. Mrs. Proudie, who is quite resentful of Madeline for poking fun and making her look all the more ridiculous during the incident with Bertie and her torn flounces, insists that, although Madeline has one leg, "She is as full of mischief as tho' she had ten." One gets the sense that both Mrs. Proudie and Lady De Courcy feel that there is something very monstrous and indecent about a crip who is sexually attractive, for they both agree that they had never seen "such eyes in a decent woman's head." Mrs. Proudie and Lady de Courcy thus become the representatives of the "decent" women of Barchester who view the combination of Madeline's deformity and her overt sexuality as a sure sign of her moral depravity. Again, Madeline, as a super-sexualized crip, is seen as Monster.

The notion that there is something innately monstrous about Madeline as a super-sexualized crip is further reinforced by the fact that Trollope subtly yet clearly indicates that Madeline is decidedly mercenary in strategically using her beauty to ensnare men:

> [Madeline's eyes] were dreadful eyes to look at ... Cruelty was there ... a desire of masterhood, cunning, and a wish for mischief. And yet, as eyes they were very beautiful. (I, 76)

This description of Madeline's eyes definitively establishes and illustrates the paradoxical link between her deformed yet beautiful body and her moral corruption. Just as her eyes reveal Madeline's propensity towards mischief and cunning as well as her ultimate desire for control while still retaining their essential beauty, her deformed body corporealizes her moral corruption without losing its viability as an object of male desire. Therefore, Madeline's eyes, as the narrator describes them here, do indeed function as the proverbial windows to her soul; however, although the glass of these windows is ostensibly transparent, the view through these windows into the complex corporeal and psychological realities of her personality remains opaque.

Because, as I have already noted, Madeline herself is acutely aware of both her innate beauty and the potential for her deformity to detract from it, she has herself carried from place to place on a couch in order to prevent her deformity from "disturb[ing] her charms" (I, 76). The painstaking detail in which Trollope describes this procedure is highly significant, for it forces the corporeal reality of Madeline's disability and her consequent dependence on the TABs around her into the forefront of the reader's mind:

> The signora was carried head foremost, her head being the care of her brother and an Italian man-servant who was accustomed to the work; her feet were in the care of the lady's maid and the lady's Italian page; and Charlotte Stanhope followed to see that all was done with due grace and decorum. In this manner they climbed easily into the drawing-room, and a broad way through the crowd having been opened, the signora rested safely on her couch. She had sent a servant beforehand to learn whether it was a right or a left hand sofa, for it required that she should dress accordingly, particularly as regarded her bracelets. (I, 91-92)

In this, her very first physical appearance in the novel, we already see Madeline acting as a proactive invalid by shrewdly managing her disability and her consequent need for TAB-powered physical transport in such a way as to minimize the potential for her disability to detract from her sexual allure. Although the logistical complexity of the procedure may make Madeline seem more like a priceless piece of antique furniture than a sexually attractive woman, her skill in thus managing her disability is clearly borne out in the ultimate appearance that she makes:

> On the one arm which her position required her to expose she wore three magnificent bracelets, each of different stones. Beneath her on the sofa, and over the cushion and head of it, was spread a crimson silk mantle or shawl, which went under her whole body and concealed her feet. Dressed as she was and looking as she did, so beautiful and yet so motionless, with the pure brilliancy of her white dress brought out and strengthened by the colour beneath it, with that lovely head, and those large bold bright staring eyes, it was impossible that either man or woman should do other than look at her. (I, 92)

For all the alacrity with which Madeline proactively seeks to manage her disability so as to minimize its impact on her sexual attractiveness, it is important to note

that, despite her success in thus managing her disability, this very act of *management* ensures that Madeline's disability remains the defining feature of her character. In fact, as Kate Lawson argues, Madeline's efforts at concealment serve only to intensify the reader's desire for revelation:

> The specifics of the description are clear enough: she must remain motionless, otherwise the gait less graceful than that of a hunchback would be obvious. Parts of the body must be hidden – the feet, one arm – and others on display – the arm with the bracelets. The exhibition is compelling for two reasons: first there is the "brilliancy" of the effect, the splendor of the facade. We cannot "do other than look at her" because we want to see *and* see beneath. We cannot see the disfigurement, for there is nothing to be seen, but our gaze is compelled to look and look again, to probe for the certain injury which she bears. She is later called a "noxious siren" [I, 279], and ... it is clear that while the visible parts of her body are enticing and seductive, the hidden body is unimaginably deformed and defiled — and defiling. On this woman's body — simultaneously inviting, demanding our gaze, and veiled, rigorously hidden — is a margin between the beautiful and the disgusting, the visible and the unimaginable. (Lawson, 59)

Extrapolating from Lawson's argument, I would like to suggest that Madeline Neroni is indeed *marginalized*, not only socially and psychologically, but also corporeally. The grotesque mismatching of her beautiful face and her deformed body make her literally the embodiment of Otherness. As Robert M. Polhemus points out, it is this paradoxical dichotomy of physical deformity and physical/sexual attractiveness which defines Madeline as a proactive invalid:

> Madeline is neither a villainess, a pathetic victim, nor a social problem. For a popular Victorian novelist to impute the equivalent of a shotgun wedding to such a character was unheard of. The proper men of Barset love her ostentatious sexuality; Slope proposes to her, and Bishop Proudie, Arabin, and Squire Thorne all hover around her couch. But

> the fact that she is a cripple shows the pressure that Victorian efforts to repress sex could exert. An internal moral censor evidently told Trollope that the flaunting of sex must be punished, and so he imagined her with one leg shorter than the other. A robust Madeline who could get up off her couch and run off with some sex-starved parson would be too dangerous for Barchester's equilibrium. She had to be kept immobile and relatively harmless. Her letters, Trollope says, "were full of wit, mischief, love, latitudinarian philosophy, free religion, and sometimes, alas! loose ribaldry." The "alas!" has an ironical and plaintive quality, as if he envied her liberty to indulge in "ribaldry." But her freedom must be in her letters and not in her life--she must be an invalid. (Polhemus, 352)

Polhemus' assertion that there is a definite strategic purpose in Trollope's decision to give Madeline a disability, that is, to make Madeline's overt sexuality more palatable to the conservative Victorian reader, seems to me quite valid. Madeline's disability does in fact greatly limit her capacity to wreak any serious moral havoc in Barchester. Nevertheless, despite the fact that her disability renders Madeline's ostentatious displays of sexuality ultimately impotent, there remains something inherently monstrous in the notion of Madeline as a super-sexualized invalid.

And yet, it is clear that simply to relegate Madeline to the stereotypical category of Monster would be to ignore the emotional complexity and sense of self with which she is endowed by Trollope. Admittedly, Trollope does not provide us with an abundance of explicit insights into Madeline's emotional life, yet her interpretations of and responses to others in their interactions with her reveal much about the way in which Madeline views herself. For example, it is clear

from the following exchange between Madeline and Mr. Slope that Madeline absolutely abhors the notion of being pitied:

> "And can I not sympathize with your lot?" said he, now seating himself on her sofa, and pushing the table away with his feet.
>
> "Sympathy is so near to pity!" said she. "If you pity me, cripple as I am, I shall spurn you from me." (I, 278)

When Mr. Slope seats himself on Madeline's sofa, he crosses the protective barricade that Madeline has constructed for herself, a barricade which is built around her disability. Madeline would have considered this a serious offense in itself; however, when Mr. Slope adds insult to injury by indicating that his attachment to her is based not only on physical attraction but also on a kind of intense sympathy for her plight as lone crippled woman, Madeline vehemently warns him that his pity will cause her to "spurn" him. It is important to note that Madeline does not have any illusions about her physical state–she calls herself a cripple. Yet, although she fully accepts her status as crip, she adamantly refuses to allow her crippledness to cause her to be lowered to the level at which she would become the object of pity. Such self-assurance in her identity as crip is at the heart of Trollope's construction of Madeline as a proactive invalid.

Conclusion

Therefore, in the final analysis, the figure of the proactive Victorian invalid as depicted by Trollope in the characters of Mary Belton and Madeline Neroni is, as Robert Polhemus says of Madeline, "neither a villainess, a pathetic victim, nor a social problem..." (352). She is, rather, a strong-minded (if weak-bodied), fully-individuated character who knows how to *manage* her own disability as well as the TABs around her in the service of either her own best interests or what she considers to be the best interests of others. If Mary Belton's innate goodness in the face of constant and severe physical suffering seems to make her a stereotypical Supercrip, her sagacity in facilitating the ultimate happy (re)union between Will and Clara liberates her from the stereotype and confirms her own individuated identity. Likewise, although the combination of Madeline's physical deformity and her overt sexuality clearly establishes her as a monstrous Other, her unequivocal acceptance of, and her absolute confidence in, her identity as a crip prevents her crip-ness from being simply subsumed by her Other-ness. Therefore, while Trollope may ostensibly appear to be basing his depiction of Mary Belton and Madeline Neroni on the eighteenth-century Monster/Supercrip binary, a more attentive reading reveals the astute insight and psychological robustness that make these characters perfect prototypes of the proactive Victorian invalid. In short, it becomes clear that Trollope's Mary and Madeline not only *have* crip power, they also know what it is and how to use it.

Chapter Seven
The Diseased Mind and the Deformed Body in George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" and *The Mill on the Floss*

Introduction: Eliot's Glimpses into Sickness and Crip-ness as Dismemberment of the Victorian Social Body

Portrayals of illness and disability clearly do not figure nearly as prominently in the fiction of George Eliot (aka Mary Ann Evans) as they do in the works of Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope. One obvious reason for this is that, unlike Dickens and Trollope, who are known for their prolificness, each publishing in the neighbourhood of fifty novels and novellas during the course of their careers, Eliot's published works include only nine full-length novels and around fifteen shorter works of prose and poetry. Within this relatively small canon of published work, it is only in her portrayal of the frail, sickly and clairvoyant Latimer in her novella "The Lifted Veil" and the moody and deformed artist Philip Wakem in her novel *The Mill on the Floss* that Eliot offers her readers a sustained and in-depth view of the corporeal realities and social implications of illness and disability. My focus in this chapter will therefore be on the ways in which Eliot uses Latimer's illness and Philip's deformity as vehicles through which to explore and articulate the Victorian conception of the cognitive

connection between an individual's body and mind, as well as the broader implications that this connection has for the social body. More specifically, I will endeavour to show that, in clearly and consistently centring her portrayal of both Latimer and Philip Wakem upon their physical and psychological frailties, Eliot articulates a vision of the intrinsic interconnectedness of the individual's mind and body, and demonstrates that this individual mind/body relationship is analogous to the reciprocal relation of the Victorian social mind-set and the Victorian social body. These connections are painstakingly established and developed by Eliot throughout "The Lifted Veil" as Latimer's initial physical sickliness as a child leads to his emotional isolation; this combination of physical sickliness and emotional isolation facilitates Latimer's becoming clairvoyant, which, in turn, precipitates the physical and psychological decline that results in his ultimate isolation and exclusion from any meaningful emotional/social connection to others. Similarly, Eliot bases her portrayal of Philip Wakem on an essential connection between his physical deformity and his often morose sensibility, the combination of which marks him out as an Other and consequently isolates him from the rest of society. Ultimately therefore, in examining Eliot's portrayals of Latimer and Philip Wakem, I will seek to delineate the ways in which Eliot uses their physical frailties and psychological foibles in order to formulate a distinctly Victorian construction of the elemental connection between the diseased mind and the deformed body. In doing so, I will also seek to interrogate the inevitable dis-ease that "sick" minds and bodies create within Victorian society.

The Diseased Mind of Latimer in "The Lifted Veil"

Published in 1859, George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" can indeed be seen as a case study of the Victorian conception of the interconnectedness of body and mind. Latimer, the protagonist and narrator of this Gothic Tale, describes himself as a having been a fragile, nervous, sickly child: "I had a complaint of the eyes that made me blind for a little while, and [mother] kept me on her knee from morning till night" (*LV*, 5). His mother died when he was very young, leaving him behind with his emotionally-distant and exacting father and his robust, self-confident older brother, Alfred. Within this new fractured family unit, Latimer's physical frailty and emotional sensitivity mark him out as an outsider and an Other:

> I fancy my father thought me an odd child, and had little fondness for me; though he was very careful in fulfilling what he regarded as a parent's duties. But he was already past the middle of life, and I was not his only son. My mother had been his second wife, and he was five-and-forty when he married her. He was a firm, unbending, intensely orderly man, in root and stem a banker, but with a flourishing graft of the active land-holder, aspiring to county influence: one of those people who are always like themselves from day to day, who are uninfluenced by the weather, and neither know melancholy nor high spirits. I held him in great awe, and appeared more timid and sensitive in his presence than at other times; a circumstance which, perhaps, helped to confirm him in the intention to educate me on a different plan from the prescriptive one with which he had complied in the case of my elder brother, already a tall youth at Eton. My brother was to be his representative and successor; he must go to Eton and Oxford, for the sake of making connections, of course: my father was not a man to underrate the bearing of Latin satirists or Greek dramatists on the attainment of an aristocratic position. But, intrinsically, he had slight esteem for "those dead but sceptred spirits"; having qualified himself

> for forming an independent opinion by reading Potter's 'Aeschylus', and dipping into Francis's 'Horace'. To this negative view he added a positive one, derived from a recent connection with mining speculations; namely, that a scientific education was the really useful training for a younger son. Moreover, it was clear that a shy, sensitive boy like me was not fit to encounter the rough experience of a public school. (*LV*, 5-6)

Latimer's innate difference, the fact that he is "an odd child," makes him a frustratingly ineffable mystery to his father. In his frustration, Latimer's father, being "very careful in fulfilling what he regarded as a parent's duties," turns to the contemporary nineteenth-century quasi-scientific/quasi-medical practice of phrenology as a key to solving the problem of Latimer. As he is consequently placed literally into the hands of the phrenologist, Mr. Letherall, Latimer's 'oddness' becomes a *bona fide* medical condition caused by physiological imbalances:

> Mr Letherall was a large man in spectacles, who one day took my small head between his large hands, and pressed it here and there in an exploratory, suspicious manner -- then placed each of his great thumbs on my temples, and pushed me a little way from him, and stared at me with glittering spectacles. The contemplation appeared to displease him, for he frowned sternly, and said to my father, drawing his thumbs across my eyebrows --
>
> "The deficiency is there, sir -- there; and here," he added, touching the upper sides of my head, "here is the excess. That must be brought out, sir, and this must be laid to sleep." (*LV*, 6)

Latimer's reaction to Mr. Letherall's examination is tellingly typical of those who experience the medicalization of their "oddness" or, more accurately, their Otherness: "I was in a state of tremor, partly at the vague idea that I was the

object of reprobation, partly in the agitation of my first hatred -- hatred of this big, spectacled man, who pulled my head about as if he wanted to buy and cheapen it" (*LV*, 6). Through the quasi-science of phrenology, his unique personal psychological, emotional, and intellectual characteristics are itemized and pathologized in terms of physiological excesses and deficiencies. As objectifying and objectionable as this diagnostic and pathologizing process is to Latimer, to his father it provides a scientifically-authenticated interpretation or diagnosis of his son's difference, and with this diagnosis, also prescribes a potential course of treatment. In accordance with this prescribed course of treatment, Latimer's father endeavours to correct the deficiencies and imbalances which are supposed to be the source of his artistic tendencies by making him study sciences and natural history. Predictably, Latimer chafes against this imposed treatment program:

> I am not aware how much Mr Letherall had to do with the system afterwards adopted towards me, but it was presently clear that private tutors, natural history, science, and the modern languages, were the appliances by which the defects of my organisation were to be remedied. I was very stupid about machines, so I was to be greatly occupied with them; I had no memory for classification, so it was particularly necessary that I should study systematic zoology and botany; I was hungry for human deeds and human emotions, so I was to be plentifully crammed with the mechanical powers, the elementary bodies, and the phenomena of electricity and magnetism. A better-constituted boy would certainly have profited under my intelligent tutors, with their scientific apparatus; and would, doubtless, have found the phenomena of electricity and magnetism as fascinating as I was, every Thursday, assured they were. As it was, I could have paired off, for ignorance of whatever was taught me, with the worst Latin scholar that was ever turned out of a classical academy. I

> read Plutarch, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixote by the sly, and supplied myself in that way with wandering thoughts, while my tutor was assuring me that "an improved man, as distinguished from an ignorant one, was a man who knew the reason why water ran down-hill." I had no desire to be this improved man; I was glad of the running water; I could watch it and listen to it gurgling among the pebbles, and bathing the bright green water-plants, by the hour together. I did not want to know why it ran; I had perfect confidence that there were good reasons for what was so very beautiful. (*LV*, 6-7)

The key to this corrective educational program of study that is imposed upon Latimer is the forcible repression of his creative imagination and artistic energy. Latimer's response to this imposed repression is secret rebellion (he reads Plutarch, and Shakespeare, and *Don Quixote* "by the sly"), which causes him to become even more introverted. Hence, the treatment which is supposed to correct, or at least ameliorate, his oddness actually causes him to become even more introverted and isolated.

Significantly, it is while recovering from a bout of illness that Latimer first experiences an episode of clairvoyance as he is mentally transported to Prague and able to perceive minute sensory details about the city without once having physically been there. Although he initially exults in the belief that his newfound visionary power is a long-wished-for manifestation of his latent poetic talent, he soon discovers that this preternatural insight carries with it some distinctly negative and foreboding implications:

> I might have believed this importunate insight to be merely a diseased activity of the imagination, but that my prevision of incalculable words and actions proved it to have a fixed relation to the mental process in other minds. But this superadded consciousness, wearying and annoying enough

> when it urged on me the trivial experience of indifferent people, became an intense pain and grief when it seemed to be opening to me the souls of those who were in a close relation to me – when the rational talk, the graceful attentions, the wittily-turned phrases, and the kindly deeds, which used to make the web of their characters, were seen as if thrust asunder by a microscopic vision, that showed all the intermediate frivolities, all the suppressed egoism, all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague capricious memories, and indolent make-shift thoughts, from which human words and deeds emerge like leaflets covering a fermenting heap. (*LV*, 13-14)

In this passage, we see in graphic detail how Latimer's "diseased ... imagination" causes him both physical and psychological pain, while at the same time triggering a process of progressive emotional and psychological isolation. This process of isolation will ultimately result in his retreat from any kind of interpersonal relation, and thus his virtually complete amputation from the social body as a diseased member. Latimer's initial optimistic impulse to associate his newly-discovered 'gift' of insight with a "diseased activity of the imagination" is indicative of Eliot's vision of the intrinsic interconnectedness of body and mind. As Miriam Bailin notes:

> For Eliot, as for Dickens, the acute awareness of "unapparent relations," could be experienced as an infirmity, "a disease of consciousness" rather than a cure for doubt and error (*LV*, 1). Eliot's story "The Lifted Veil" ... is perhaps the most explicit evocation in her works of the act of perception as ailment. Latimer, the hero of the tale, is afflicted with the power to penetrate the minds of others whether he wishes to or not. He specifically identifies his preternatural insight as a "disease – a sort of intermittent delirium, concentrating [the] energy of [the] brain into moments of unhealthy activity" [*LV*, 12]. Like the sick man in Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Latimer (a poet manqué) suffers from a feverish, involuntary version of the narrator's fine discernment of character and motivation. Moreover,

> Latimer's ability to hear the thoughts of others neither increases his sympathy nor enables him to act fitly, but rather diminishes his estimation of others and fuels his self-doubt. "Seeing truly," even if possible, in other words, has no necessary moral effect nor does it provide grounds for determining right action and belief, innocence or guilt. On the contrary, it can cause a paralysis of the will. Noting the relation between Latimer's gift and realism as narrative mode, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out that the insights of realism "can diminish the self, inundating it in the trivial pettiness of humankind, tainting it with the secret corruption of neighboring souls, and paralyzing it with the experience of contradictory needs and perspectives."[14] We should not be surprised, then, to find Eliot on occasion celebrating the radical reduction of consciousness rather than its expansion, and locating the empirical basis for right action and perception not in an exhaustive exploration into the nature of reality, but in the mute, imperative fact of physical need and the involuntary spasm of response. (Bailin, 115)

A few critics, most notably Millie M. Kidd, have argued against the assertion made here by Bailin, and echoed elsewhere by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Barbara Hardy, and U. C. Knopflmacher, that Latimer's "gift" of insight does not stimulate or expand his capacity for sympathy but rather infects and paralyzes it, making Latimer essentially incapable of any human connection and thus culpable in his own demise. Kidd posits the argument that the "anguish he experiences as unwilling witness to the petty, selfish motivation and meanness underlying human actions contributes to our growing conviction that the cause of Latimer's catastrophe is the impact of a crass, unresponsive world on a sensitive individual" (38). It seems to me however that this reading essentially ignores Eliot's ultimate construction of the intrinsic interconnectedness of body and mind

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[14]Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 474-475. [Bailin's note]

as it informs the characterization of Latimer in "The Lifted Veil," and as it becomes even more developed and prominent in Eliot's portrayal of Philip Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss*. In fact, Latimer himself associates both his "superadded consciousness" and his "peculiar bitterness against [his] brother" with his "diseased condition" (*LV*, 18), thus clearly establishing an inextricable link between physical frailty and emotional dysfunction.

In an endeavour to further support her argument for a rehabilitative reading of Latimer, Kidd engages the argument that Latimer is essentially an unsympathetic character because he lacks the ability to love:

> There are those who believe Latimer's misery is perpetuated by his inability to love (eg. Knopflmacher 154). I disagree. Following the death of his brother, Alfred, he shows genuine pity and affection for his grieving father, who has never given Latimer any warmth or understanding: "My father had been one of the most successful men in the money-getting world: he had had no sentimental sufferings, no illness ... But now, at last, a sorrow had come -- the sorrow of old age, which suffers the more from the crushing of its pride and its hopes ..." [*LV*, 27-28]. Although Latimer is able to perceive how trivial and prosaic his father's life had been, he also senses the depth of the old man's suffering at the loss of his favorite son, and gradually his tenderness wins his father's genuine affection. Furthermore, after his marriage deteriorates to a state of "polite and irrevocable alienation" [*LV*, 36], Latimer continues to feel sorry for his estranged wife: "There was still pity in my soul for every living thing, and Bertha was living -- was surrounded with possibilities of misery" [*LV*, 37]. (Kidd, 40)

To my mind, there certainly seems to be some considerable merit in the arguments that Kidd makes about Latimer's in fact having a capacity for sympathy. Indeed, I think Kidd is largely correct in asserting that Latimer's expressions of sympathy–especially towards his grieving father–are genuine.

However, I think it is an attempt to stretch this argument beyond its sustainable limits to suggest that Latimer's capacity for sympathy, viable though it may be, remains totally unaffected and unimpaired by his "diseased consciousness." Ruminating on his antagonistic relationship with his brother, Alfred, Latimer himself comes to the conclusion that "my selfishness was even stronger than his -- it was only a suffering selfishness instead of an enjoying one" (*LV*, 25). In the same vein, only a page earlier, he observes that he "felt a sort of pitying anguish over the pathos of [his] own lot: the lot of a being finely organised for pain, but with hardly any fibres that responded to pleasure -- to whom the idea of future evil robbed the present of its joy, and for whom the idea of future good did not still the uneasiness of a present yearning or a present dread" (*LV*, 24). Taken together and read back into the overarching context of Latimer's "diseased condition," these statements become clearly indicative of the fact that even his capacity for sympathy is warped and impaired by his physical and emotional dis-ease.

Perhaps the ultimate proof that Latimer's emotional processes are in fact affected by his "diseased consciousness" is what critics such as Knopflmacher have termed his "willful blindness" (Kidd, 38) in being romantically drawn to his brother's fiancé, the cold-hearted Bertha, despite his horrifying prevision of their disastrous future marriage. Apparently possessing just enough self-awareness to acknowledge the fact that his attraction to Bertha is based on his own double-consciousness, he appeals to the reader to sympathize with his predicament:

> Behind the slim girl Bertha, whose words and looks I watched for, whose touch was bliss, there stood continually that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth, -- with the barren selfish soul laid bare; no longer a fascinating secret, but a measured fact, urging itself perpetually on my unwilling sight. Are you unable to give me your sympathy -- you who read this? Are you unable to imagine this double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? Yet you must have known something of the presentiments that spring from an insight at war with passion; and my visions were only like presentiments intensified to horror. You have known the powerlessness of ideas before the might of impulse; and my visions, when once they had passed into memory, were mere ideas -- pale shadows that beckoned in vain, while my hand was grasped by the living and the loved. (*LV*, 21)

As sincere and disarming as this appeal may ostensibly seem, I would argue that its ultimate legitimacy is severely and ironically undercut by the fact that, at this point in the story, Latimer himself has already forcefully and repeatedly expressed his own "weariness" and "annoyance" at "all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague capricious memories, and indolent make-shift thoughts" which divide the minds of his fellow human beings. These expressions of impatience and annoyance with the double-mindedness of others demonstrates Latimer's own lack of sympathy for those who are afflicted by precisely the same kind of divided consciousness that he himself pleads as the defense for his persevering attraction to Bertha. His appeal for the reader's sympathy on account of his piteous state of double-mindedness is thus ironically undercut by his own inability/unwillingness to sympathize with fellow creatures who exhibit the same kind of double-mindedness.

Hence, in the final analysis, it can legitimately be argued that Latimer's physical frailties and psychological infirmities are not simply linked, but also simultaneously progressive. Latimer goes from being a sickly child, to an odd child, to an emotionally-isolated adolescent, and finally to being an adult who is so severely emotionally and physically debilitated by a diseased and divided consciousness that he must cut himself off from any and all significant interactions with other people. The essence of Latimer's character thus remains consistently defined and confined according to his physical and psychological feebleness. Consequently, in accordance with the conventional Victorian construction of the interconnectedness between mind and body, Latimer's diseased mind necessitates his isolation and thus his metaphorical amputation from the larger social body.

The Deformed Body of Philip Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss*

Although a more complex and more fully developed character than Latimer, Philip Wakem, the young deformed artist in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, is also defined almost totally in terms of his physical and psychological infirmities. First published in 1860, *The Mill on the Floss*, is widely considered to be Eliot's most overtly autobiographical novel; the relationship between Tom and Maggie Tulliver as children, for example, closely resembles the relationship that Mary Ann Evans had with her brother, Isaac, who, like Tom, was considered to have a rather rigid personality. Likewise, the character of the physically deformed and

emotionally sensitive Philip Wakem is widely thought to be based on a man named M. D'Albert, who was "a very superior man, gentle, refined, and of unusual mental attainments, [whom Eliot] found a highly desirable daily companion. He was an artist by profession, and it is whispered that he suggested some of the traits in the character of the delicate-minded Philip Wakem" (Blind, 53).

The plot of *The Mill on the Floss* centres on Maggie, who is a vibrant, emotional presence in a conservative and harshly judgmental community. She is brighter than her brother, Tom, both in terms of her book learning and her impatience with the rigid "codes of honor" by which Tom defends his family and his work; yet her nonconformist nature causes her to become increasingly isolated both in and by her community. Like Latimer, Maggie is an 'odd child.' The only person, other than Mr. Tulliver, who admires Maggie and shows her affection is Philip Wakem, the physically deformed son of the man who bought the Tullivers' mill away from the family and thus represents to the seethingly jealous and inferior-feeling Tom everything in the world that is aligned against him.

Philip's physical deformity is consistently the focal point of others' responses to him throughout the novel. Essentially, these responses to Philip's deformity take one of four forms: there is the dismissive stance taken by Mrs. Pullet and by St. Ogg's society in general; there is the antagonistic stance which equates physical deformity with moral corruption--a stance which Tom inherits from Mr. Tulliver; there is the discerning stance taken by Lucy and Stephen--a

stance which enables them to separate the individual from the deformity; and finally, there is the stance of pity--a stance most prominently taken by Maggie. The fact that Philip himself actively encourages Maggie to feel sorry for him is indicative of the fundamentally problematic nature of Eliot's portrayal of Philip as a crip.

It could be said that Philip Wakem, as introduced by Mrs. Pullet, who acts as the spokesperson for St. Ogg's society, is doubly *'challenged'* - he is "Wakem's hump-backed son" (131). Philip's "hump-back," which would, in modern days, surely be diagnosed as scoliosis, is second to the debility of being Wakem's son. Granted, Philip's parentage affords him many material advantages and does not exclude him from the society of fine families like the Deanes and the Guests; yet it is the fact that Philip is Mr. Wakem's son that proves to be his greatest disadvantage when it comes to his interactions with the Tullivers. But even in Mrs. Pullet's characterization of Philip, he is essentially deprived of any real identity of his own, for he is identified first in relation to his father and then in terms of his deformity. I find it a particularly disturbing aspect of Eliot's overall characterization of Philip that even the narrator seems to sanction the practice of identifying Philip solely in terms of his deformity. Witness the narrator's "defense" of Philip's encouragement of Maggie to go against her conscience and carry on a clandestine relationship with him:

> Do not think too hardly of Philip. Ugly and deformed people have great need of unusual virtues, because they are likely to be extremely uncomfortable without them: but the theory that unusual virtues spring up by direct consequence out of personal disadvantages, as animals get thicker wool in

> severe climates, is perhaps a little overstated. The temptations of beauty are much dwelt upon, but I fancy they only bear the same relation to those of ugliness, as the temptation to excess at a feast, where the delights are varied for eye and ear as well as palate, bears to the temptation to assail the desperation of hunger. Does not the Hunger Tower stand as the type of the utmost trial to what is human in us? (*MF*, 430-1)

This passage is indicative of an essential complexity and resulting ambiguity in the narrator's stance toward Philip. While it is clear from the latter half of this passage that the narrator is far from accepting the romanticized view of "Ugly and deformed people" as being automatically endowed with extraordinary self-sacrificing virtue, the fact that the narrator numbers Philip among this conglomerate group of "ugly and deformed people" is indicative of a fundamental undermining of Philip's individuality which recurs throughout the novel. The narrator's basic ambivalence towards Philip as a crip becomes unmistakably recognizable in the fact that it is only by negating Philip's individual identity and lumping him in with all "ugly and deformed people" that she is ostensibly able to set Philip up as the exception which explodes the myth of the ultra-virtuous, self-sacrificing crip. However, in associating Philip, his self-centeredness notwithstanding, with those "ugly and deformed people" who "have great need of unusual virtues," the narrator tacitly reinforces the conception of the generic crip on which this myth is based. Thus, while endeavouring to assert Philip's humanness, the narrator tacitly sanctions the tendency of other characters in the novel to identify Philip solely in relation to his deformity.

As I have already indicated, Tom Tulliver stands out as being the one character in the novel who is most rigidly negative in his identification of Philip solely in relation to his deformity. It is important to note, however, that Tom does not simply develop his antagonism towards Philip on his own, but rather that his antagonism towards Philip grows directly from the seeds of suspicion and hatred that his father had been planting in him from his childhood. Because Philip is the son of a man whom Mr. Tulliver believes to be morally corrupt, Mr. Tulliver instills in Tom the view that Philip's physical deformity is the outward manifestation of a morally-twisted mind and soul. As the following passage demonstrates, the father-son bond between Mr. Tulliver and Tom is, to a large extent, forged by a mutual hatred of both Wakem and his "crooked" son:

> "Tom, my lad," he said in a stronger voice ... "You shall make a speech to 'em. I'll tell 'em it's you as got the best part o' the money. They'll see I'm honest to the last, and ha' got an honest son. Ah! Wakem 'ud be fine and glad to have a son like mine -- a fine straight fellow -- i'stead of that poor crooked creatur!" (455)

In distinguishing Tom, "a fine straight fellow," from Philip, "that poor crooked creatur," Mr. Tulliver delineates a dichotomy which defines Tom's relationship to Philip throughout the novel. Inspired and guided by his father's basic antagonism towards Wakem and all that belongs to him, Tom sets Philip up as a kind of negative anti-self against which Tom's good qualities are all the more sharply defined. We see Tom begin his practice of defining himself against Philip in their first encounter at school, an encounter in which Tom feels very suspicious towards "the humpback" (240). This suspicion is verified, in Tom's eyes, by the

discovery that Philip does not share his love for virile physical outdoor pursuits. When Philip insults Tom's sense of superior masculinity by refusing to come and watch his demonstration of swordsmanship, Tom lashes out, accusing him of being "no better than a girl" (247). What Tom's incessant need to define his virility against Philip's physical feebleness leads to is a very disturbing negation of Philip's humanity: "still Tom, retaining all his old repulsion for Philip's deformity, shrank from attributing to his sister the possibility of feeling more than a friendly interest in such an unfortunate exception to the common run of men" (442). Hence, when Tom angrily confronts Philip after learning of Philip's clandestine relationship with Maggie, Tom uses Philip's deformity as his main weapon against him:

> "... you try and worm yourself into the affections of a handsome girl who is not eighteen, and has been shut out from the world by her father's misfortunes! That's your crooked notion of honour, is it? I call it base treachery - I call it taking advantage of circumstances to win what's too good for you -- what you'd never get by fair means." (448)

It is clear from this speech that Tom has come to see Philip's physical deformity as an unmistakable outward sign of moral corruption. Just as his physical `crookedness` renders him an unfit object for the "affections of a handsome girl," his moral deformity renders him capable of only a "crooked notion of honour." Philip has thus become, for Tom, the embodiment of moral corruption.

At the other end of the scale, there is Maggie, who consistently sees Philip as the object of pity. Maggie's first meeting with Philip in the school awakens her "tenderness for deformed things" (252). It is out of this "tenderness for deformed

things" that Maggie forms her initial attachment to Philip, an attachment which is based on sisterly gratitude for the kindness that Philip showed Tom when he too was temporarily disabled, and, of course, pity for Philip's state of body. In fact, if there is one word that describes Maggie's strongest point of attachment to Philip from the beginning of the novel to the end, that word is pity. Repeatedly, throughout the novel, we are told that Philip's "deformity" awakens Maggie's "old pity" (392, 396), and that Maggie feels bound to Philip as one who had "early claims on her love and pity" (555). Yet, because Maggie's "love" for Philip has its roots in pity, an emotion which by nature lowers its object, and thus renders it incapable of reciprocation, it remains too insubstantial to grow and flourish. In its own way, therefore, Maggie's pity-based love for Philip is just as detrimental to his individuality as are Tom's suspicion and hatred.

Somewhere in between Tom's hatred of Philip's "crookedness" and Maggie's "tenderness for deformed things" is Stephen and Lucy's discerning view of Philip, a view which enables them to separate Philip from his deformity. Because Stephen and Lucy are able to separate Philip from his deformity, they are able to put the deformity in perspective, and thus come to have more realistic expectations of him as an individual; Lucy wishes Philip "were not so morbid about his deformity" (484), while Stephen chides him for being remiss in informing his servants of his whereabouts so that they might direct visitors (such as Stephen) appropriately (530). Granted, even Lucy and Stephen have their moments of crip fixation. Lucy romanticizes Maggie's attachment to Philip, declaring, "It is very beautiful that you should love Philip: I never thought such a

happiness would befall him" (498). By the same token, Stephen seems to entertain some initial scruples about horning in on Philip's happiness when he becomes his rival for Maggie's love; he repeatedly "fluctuat[es] between the indulgence of a feeling and the systematic concealment of it" (552), largely in deference to his ostensible friendship with Philip. Such behaviour on the part of Stephen and Lucy is indicative of the fact that even they are acutely aware that Philip's deformity confers on him the status of Other. Yet, on the whole, Lucy and Stephen provide a rare and refreshing affirmation of Philip's individuality.

Such affirmations of Philip's individuality, however, are ultimately few and far between. Eliot's portrayal of Philip as crip remains problematic because Philip remains primarily the construction of other people who view him chiefly in terms of his deformity. However, as Gillian Beer suggests, Eliot does provide Philip with at least a nominal identity that is not totally incorporated by his status as crip, namely that of artistic interpreter:

> Philip says of himself ` "my voice is middling--like everything else in me".` But Philip is the interpreter, a redeemed version of Latimer, able despite his debility to see precisely and kindly into the sensibility of others ... His exclusion from active life sets him alongside Maggie in a way which confuses likeness and difference. He tempts Maggie with his offer to be `brother and teacher`, but he can never satisfy her sexually. (92)

But just as fundamentally dysfunctional as the romantic relationship between Maggie and Philip is the artist-muse relationship suggested by Beer and more explicitly delineated by John Levay in his article "Maggie as Muse." While it is an undeniable fact that Maggie is Philip's chief source of artistic inspiration, the fact

we never see Philip engaged in any artistic activity totally independent of Maggie makes Philip's identity as artist seem like merely an incidental extension of his attachment to Maggie. Yet, as underdeveloped and contingent as Philip's identity as an artist may at times appear, by endowing the humpbacked, moody, and thus morally-suspect Philip with artistic tendencies, Eliot establishes an unmistakable link between Philip and the best-known artistic humpback of the previous century, namely, Alexander Pope. As John LeVay points out:

> [Philip's] reiteration of the literary part of his artistic interests and the primacy he allows to classical literature reinforces one's sense of his affinity to Alexander Pope, the peerless translator of Homer and adapter of Horace. One thinks too of Philip's occasional fits of "peevish susceptibility ... nervous irritability" (148), phrases that echo Dr. Johnson's citation of "peevishness" and "irritability" as recurrent moods of the "fretful" genius of his *Pope*. Sir Joshua Reynolds described Pope as "humpbacked and deformed," and we find that Philip is also described (by his detractors) as "humpback[ed]" (43) and "deformed" (342). Dr. Johnson qualifies his detailing of Pope's "deformity" with the phrase "but his face was not displeasing, and his eyes were animated and vivid"; while the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss* allows that Philip's face "was not disagreeable" (143) and that his eyes "were ... liquid and beautiful" (293). (LeVay, 71)

Though Philip may be, as Beer suggests, "a redeemed version of Latimer, able despite his debility to see precisely and kindly into the sensibility of others," the wound from which he draws these powers of perception remains so big that it all but swallows up his identity as artist. Unlike Pope, Philip remains ultimately unable to integrate his identity as artist with his identity as crip. Thus, rather than liberating him from it, his identity as artist ultimately reinforces the central construction of Philip as crip.

The novel's final image of Philip as a solitary visitor to Maggie's grave seems to me an ultimate reinscription of his definitive identity as Othered crip. While Stephen, the ostensible love of Maggie's life, is granted a redemptive, and presumably happy, marital (re)union with Lucy, Philip ultimately remains "solitary" (*MF*, 656). All through the novel, Philip's physical deformity and his often morose sensibility mark him out as an Other and keep him essentially emotionally isolated from everyone around him, with the lone exception of Maggie. Although, as we have seen, Maggie too focusses on Philip's deformity as the defining element of his identity and thus the generative force behind her pity-based love for him, this does not negate the fact that, in many ways, she serves as an effective link between Philip and the rest of the community. With Maggie's death, this link is dissolved, leaving Philip once again as the isolated, solitary crip.

Conclusion

If the term 'cripness' as I have thus far been using and developing it in preceding chapters has come to convey a sense in which the experiential portrayal of illness and disability can become proactive and, in fact, enabling, then it seems to me that Eliot's choice to centre her portrayal of both Latimer and Philip Wakem around the perceived connection between their respective physical infirmities and their psychological and emotional dysfunctions can ultimately be seen as a disablement of cripness. Even though, as I have already stated, I do agree with Gillian Beer that Philip can be seen as "a redeemed version of

Latimer, able despite his debility to see precisely and kindly into the sensibility of others," I would argue that Philip remains just as excluded from his surrounding community on account of his infirmities and dysfunctions as is Latimer. Although, unlike Latimer, Philip's capacity for genuine sympathy and empathy with his fellow creatures remains entirely unimpaired by either his physical debility or his emotional isolation, both characters are equally defined by their physical and/or psychological difference, and are thus equally marked out as Others in and by their communities. Much like the Demonic Cripples and Charity Cripples portrayed by Dickens, and notably unlike the proactive invalids portrayed by Trollope, Eliot's crip characters lack the capacity to articulate their debilities into a more comprehensive identity. Thus, they remain, in fact, disabled by their cripness.

Chapter Eight
Conclusion: The Continuing Saga of Crip Writers and Written Crips

The primary work of this dissertation has been to examine the constructions of selected eighteenth-century crip writers and nineteenth-century written crips from a Disability Studies perspective. Disability Studies, as a relatively new but rapidly growing field of academic inquiry, seeks to interrogate the historical, political, legal, social, cultural, and literary meanings ascribed to disability and disabled populations with a view towards gaining a better understanding of the ways in which disability becomes a social construction in addition to being a corporeal reality. As Rosemarie Garland Thomson explains (in "The Beauty and the Freak," 2000), Disability Studies is as concerned with understanding cultural representation as with fathoming the lived experience of disability:

> This new critical perspective conceptualizes disability as a representational system rather than a medical problem, a discursive construction rather than a personal misfortune or a bodily flaw, and a subject appropriate for wide-ranging cultural analysis within the humanities instead of an applied field within medicine, rehabilitation, or social work. ... Such an approach focuses its analysis, then, on how disability is imagined, specifically on the figures and narratives that comprise the cultural context in which we know ourselves and one another. (181)

Therefore, what I have sought to do is to explore critically the ways in which the portrayals of illness and disability in the works of eighteenth-century crip writers, Pope, Johnson, and Leapor, and written crips created by nineteenth-century

TABs, Dickens, Trollope, and Eliot, engage with dominant cultural readings of ill and disabled bodies in order to create either enabling or disabling constructions of illness and disability. In this concluding chapter of my study, I review the main conclusions that I have reached in my exploration of the portrayals of illness and disability in the works of these six authors, and also identify and explore briefly a few striking commonalities that exist between the dominant social constructions of crip writers and written crips from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the constructions of illness and disability that are still prevalent in the early years of the twenty-first century.

The dissertation begins by providing a necessary framework and definition of terms for my examination of eighteenth-century crip writers and nineteenth-century written crips. I begin by outlining the major motivations and contexts for this study, raising the question of what distinguishes bodies that are considered "normal," healthy, fully-functional, and thus desirable and/or viable, from bodies that are considered "abnormal," unhealthy, disabled, and thus undesirable and/or non-viable. I examine the common views of illness and disability that were prevalent specifically in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, the basic tenets of Classical Humoral Theory, which posits a direct connection between body and mind via the nervous system, and the resulting view that bodily `afflictions` such as illness and disability were usually considered to be either the manifestation of the body's cruel domination over the mind, or the outward evidence of a mind that had itself become corrupted and diseased. I trace the

gradual nineteenth-century shift away from the eighteenth-century emphasis on illness and disability as evidence of an *individual's* psycho-physiological dysfunction, and move towards an emphasis on illness and disability as *social phenomena* which impact the whole of society. Based on these general social and historical contexts, I define several key binaries relating to constructions of illness and disability and also examine several central questions relating to issues surrounding illness, disability, and the construction of identity. Finally, I consider the implications that this kind of study of crip writers and written crips can have in terms of facilitating a better understanding of the ongoing evolution–or, in some cases, regression–of societal attitudes towards persons with illnesses or disabilities as reflected in literary portrayals of illness and disability.

In the first of my chapters on written crips, I explore the ways in which Alexander Pope seeks to synthesize his conflicting identities as Author and Crip into a coherent identity as Crip-Author. Combining biographical information about his severe spinal deformity and resulting debility with close readings of the self-reflexive and self-constructing elements in Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and *An Essay on Man*, I seek to delineate Pope's ongoing struggle to bring together two seemingly incongruous identities. As one of "the deformed," Pope is, at best, a deprived and driven Supercrip, or, at worst, a morally corrupt and corrupting Monster. As a talented and distinguished Man of Letters, however, he is a public celebrity, welcomed into a congenial community of authors and courted or harassed by an endless mob of upstart writers. I suggest that, while such an

attempt to merge these two personas together into a coherent identity is indeed an undertaking fraught with difficulty, Pope, to a large extent, succeeds in this endeavour by engaging both the Monster and Supercrip stereotypes in these two poems, and thus presenting himself to his readers as neither Monster nor Supercrip, but rather as a kind of hybrid between the two–a hybrid in which Pope confronts his own monstrosity while affirming his identity as Crip-Author.

Then I seek to explore the largely unwritten disabilities of Samuel Johnson. I begin with an examination of the biographical documentation of Johnson's various physical frailties and psychological foibles by James Boswell in his definitive biography of Johnson. I interrogate Boswell's ongoing efforts to make meaning out of Johnson's inscrutable movements and utterances. I suggest that Boswell's preferred method, as a biographer, for dealing with the inevitable manifestations of Johnson's disabilities is to define Johnson's physical and psychological frailties and foibles as marks of his status as afflicted yet heroic Supercrip. However, when, as happens in the Temple-Bar episode, Johnson's antics become too bizarre for Boswell to incorporate them into his construction of Johnson as a heroic Supercrip, he either opts to narrate those incidents as mere happenings, offering little or nothing in the way of editorial comment, or, less frequently, he chooses to trivialize those incidents entirely by labeling them as "trifling," but which must be reported in order to preserve his fidelity as a biographer to "true, candid warm admirers of Johnson" (3:190-191). I also examine Johnson's efforts to make meaning out of his own fragmented identity by engaging the impulse to construct meanings and identities as seen in

four of his best-known works, namely, the *Life of Pope*, the *Life of Savage*, the review of Soame Jenyns' *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origins of Evil*, and the *Vanity of Human Wishes*. I conclude this examination by suggesting that the Author who so eloquently explores themes of identity construction, perceived versus actual reality, and the *'problem'* of human suffering in these works is also the Crip who must struggle to make meaning out of his own inarticulable corporeal tics and psychological antics. Johnson's Crip-ness thus remains a locus of dis-ease for both biographer and author.

I end my discussion of eighteenth-century crip writers by exploring the quintessentially eighteenth-century 'problem' of body versus mind as it is made manifest in the life and work of the full-time kitchen-maid and part-time writer, Mary Leapor. I seek to demonstrate that Leapor's approach to illness, specifically in relation to the body/mind dichotomy as it was commonly conceptualized in eighteenth-century society, makes her poems, in many interesting and important ways, encapsulations of eighteenth-century views of the interrelationship between mind, body, and identity. More specifically, I argue that Leapor, like her iconic mentor, Alexander Pope, engages and interrogates the dominant eighteenth-century binary constructions of body versus mind in poems such as "Celadon to Mira," "An Epistle to Artemisia. On Fame," "The Headach'," "Mira's Will," "An Epistle to a Lady" and "On Sickness" in order to assert her unique legitimacy and authority as an Othered Author. I assert that Leapor may indeed

be considered "The successor of Pope"[15] insofar as her poetry both engages and interrogates the quintessential eighteenth-century problem of the mind/body dichotomy.

I move from Crip Writers of the Eighteenth Century to Written Crips of the Nineteenth Century with an examination of the various constructions of illness and disability in the novels of Charles Dickens. I begin with a brief discussion of the tenuousness and potential contestability of Dickens' identity as a TAB author rather than a crip author. I argue that Dickens' view of illness and disability as social phenomena rather than individual affliction or punishment translates into his characteristically tropic presentation of ill and disabled characters as often stereotypical embodiments of the various social ills plaguing Victorian England. Any examination of the various constructions of illness and disability in Dickens' novels must include a careful consideration of the ways in which these ill and disabled characters either conform to, or deviate from, conventional Victorian readings of ill and disabled bodies. For all their physical, psychological, and emotional differences, Dickensian crip characters can, by and large, be classified into three main types: the Pathetic/Charity Crip, the Evil/Demonic Crip, and the Plucky/Persevering Crip. Dickens very strategically constructs the deformed and disabled bodies of characters Tiny Tim, Daniel Quilp. Jenny Wren, and others in such a way as to render readable the correlation between body, mind, and spirit. I suggest that, through his great skill in using individual, fragmented, ill and

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[15]*ML, PUSO*, II, 278.

disabled bodies to expose the infirmities of the profit-driven industrialized Victorian society, as well as to articulate the potential efficacy of practising social virtues such as Empathy and Charity, Dickens' crip characters become microcosmic embodiments of the Victorian Social Body with all its ailments and infirmities.

From Dickens' often tropic portrayals of illness and disability, I go on to explore the nineteenth-century construction of the proactive invalid as rendered by Anthony Trollope in *The Belton Estate* and *Barchester Towers*. My argument is centred on the assertion that the Victorian notion of proactive invalidism can be directly linked back to the eighteenth-century construction of the Supercrip. Trollope uses the originally and predominantly eighteenth-century construct of the Monster/Supercrip binary to articulate essentially enabling portrayals of Mary Belton, the long-suffering Supercrip, and Madeline Neroni, the super-sexualized Monster, as fully individuated, proactive Victorian invalids. I sum up this argument by asserting that, while Trollope may ostensibly appear to be basing his depiction of Mary Belton and Madeline Neroni on the eighteenth-century Monster/Supercrip binary, a more attentive reading reveals the astute insight and psychological robustness that make these characters perfect prototypes of the proactive Victorian invalid.

Finally, I look at the ways in which Eliot uses the illness of Latimer in her novella "The Lifted Veil" and the deformity of Philip Wakem in her novel *The Mill on the Floss* as vehicles through which to explore and articulate the Victorian conception of the cognate connection between an individual's body and mind, as

well as the broader implications that this connection has for the social body. Eliot uses the physical frailties and psychological foibles of Latimer and Philip Wakem in order to formulate a construction of the elemental connection between the diseased mind and the deformed body, as well as the inevitable dis-ease that "sick" minds and bodies create within Victorian society. In contrast to the proactive crip characters created by Trollope, Eliot's portrayal of Latimer and Philip Wakem constitutes a reversion to the kind of tropic construction that characterize Dickensian Charity Cripples and Demonic Crips. Eliot's crip characters lack the capacity to articulate their debilities into a more comprehensive identity and thus remain, in fact, disabled by their cripness.

The connections that exist between the constructions of illness and disability that were prevalent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature and the constructions of illness and disability that are dominant in the literature and culture of late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century North America offer, I think, fruitful ground for further exploration by scholars in Disability Studies. For example, Christopher Reeve's *'courageous battle'* to overcome his disability has made him both a *crip writer* and a *written crip*, thus creating a whole new level of cultural investment in the Supercrip archetype. At the same time, there have been periodic flurries of sympathetic news reports and general media coverage about *'courageous'* parents being driven to take the lives of their children because monstrous disability had reduced those lives to pain-filled existences. These news stories subtly, or sometimes not-so-subtly,

invoke the stereotype of Monster-Crip in order to garner public sympathy for these desperate parents who could no longer cope with the monstrous demands of caring for their severely disabled children. On the other hand, twentieth-century *crip writers* who seek to write their own stories, as do Christy Brown, Christopher Nolan and Ruth Sienkiewicz-Mercer, are seen by the dominant ableist culture as modernized versions of the Plucky/Persevering/Survivor Crip who snatches triumph from the jaws of tragedy by virtue of her/his own intestinal fortitude. Such connections between Augustan, Victorian and twentieth-century constructions of crip writers and written crips offer, I think, important opportunities for further exploration of the ways in which ill and disabled bodies continue to be written and read.

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